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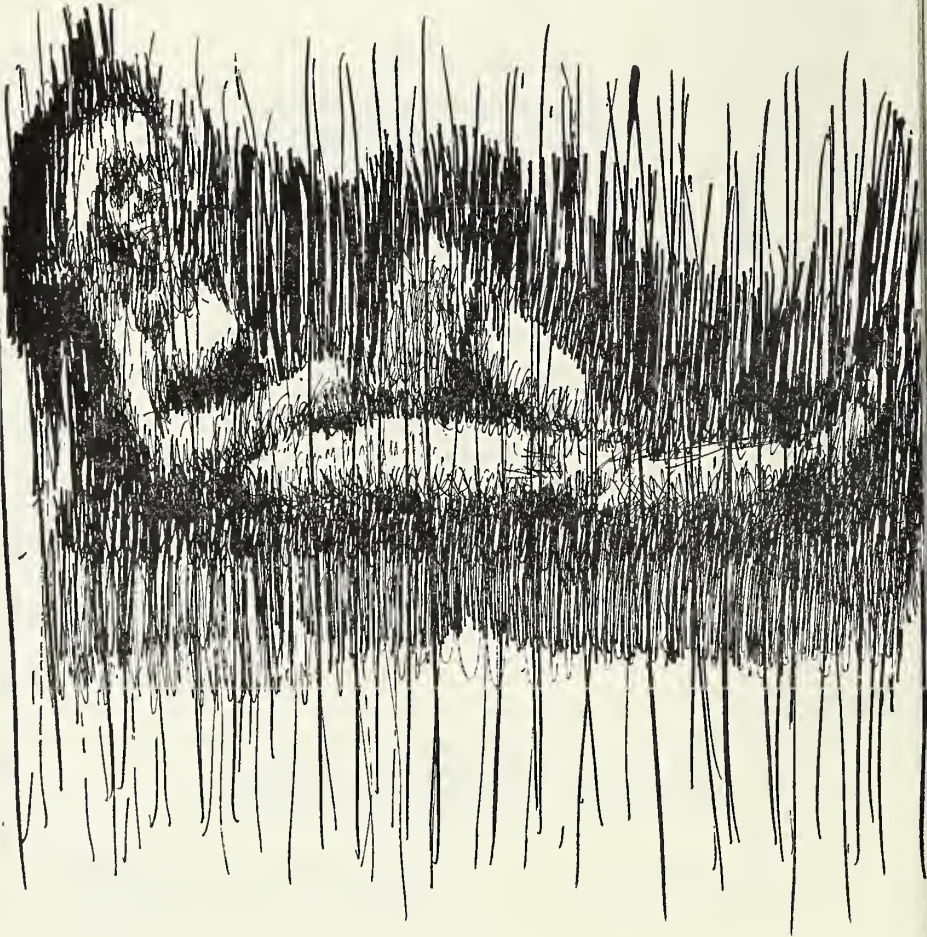
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Archive will be sponsoring a Freshman writing contest in its next issue. Ten dollar awards will be given for the best short story, poem and essay. Deadline for the contest is December 10th. Deadline for the second issue is December 15th.

Those interested in creative writing are invited to the Archive office every Friday afternoon from 2:00 to 5:00 for informal discussions.



Ellen Few

THE ARCHIVE

VOLUME 78 NUMBER 1

NOVEMBER 1965

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Reminiscence^{*}

A woman's voice—shrill, but wavering and anxious—pierced the heat of the mid-day hush that hung over the expensive green. Ivonne looked towards her husband's studio. She was in a vague reverie that always seemed to snag her attention after yelling to Paul that lunch was to be served. Ivonne stood erect on the lawn. Her carriage was proud, or so it seemed at first glance. Her hair neatly combed, she looked as fresh as she had been the day before and the day before that. Though past fifty, ten years older than her husband, she looked as though her uncanny youth had spit in the eye of time.

Shoulders hunched, head bent down, arms folded tightly across his narrow chest, Paul stared down at a dry spot set off by the dark wood that surrounded it. Some turpentine had spilled onto the floor yesterday. Now there was a spot there where it had splashed. An imperfect circle, blanched, the color of dry bones. And that one indifferent blemish reflected a picture of the vagaries of fate that gave him a wife, and made him an artist, a creator.

"P-aw-l dear," intoned Ivonne's shrill bird-call once more. The cool shadow filtered air in the studio enveloped Paul's thoughtful figure, a curved wisp of flesh among the more durable trappings of his trade. A unique fortune in many ways thought Paul, before he realized that the call to sustenance had penetrated the sweetness of the linseed oil, the clay, and the fresh paint. Ivonne's voice finally straightened Paul's curving spine and urged him toward the door of his studio.

The cold, wrought-iron latch clicked as Paul opened the door and stepped down onto the grass-covered earth. The ground gave a little beneath his shoes as he plodded up the slight incline, shortening the distance between himself and Ivonne. Behind Ivonne stood the white, Dutch colonial house. It was solid and clean and seemed as firmly rooted in the soil as the muscular oaks and maples that cast nets of shadow over it. Paul stopped by Ivonne's side, and surveyed the freshly painted house, the newly-mowed lawn, the neat flower beds and the bird-feeders filled with gold and brown seeds.

^{*}*Reminiscence* was the fiction winner in the Anne Flexner Memorial Writing Contest last spring.

Ivonne breathed deeply sucking fresh air into her fine nose. Then she exhaled loudly, pretending to derive great pleasure from the content and consistency of the atmosphere. Paul only looked about him somewhat dreamily as if the warm air had sapped him of the intensity that, when he was in the studio, made his eyes seem such a clear grey. Leaving Ivonne to imbibe herself with a warm breeze that changed the pattern of the shadows, Paul walked slowly away.

He washed his hands and face in the bathroom at the east wing of the house. He dried on a white guest towel, which he left streaked with dirt and charcoal mudges. Expressionless, he walked through the cool, dry hall, through the living room in which the old mantle clock ticked loudly in the dustless air, to the dining room. It was the only very light room in the house. Two windows, of which each pane was cleaned to the point of invisibility, opened onto the lawn. They let in beams of yellow-white light that glinted on the small, cut-glass chandelier overhanging the mahogany table. Paul sat at the head of the table, smoking, and gazing out of the windows at the studio as he always did before the food reached the table. When Paul was in this room, his eyes always focused on one of three places. He either looked out the windows, at the plate of food before him, or, though rarely, at Ivonne, who sat at his right. He never looked at the walls. And so, of course, never studied the painting of a flower in a cracked pot, nor the photograph of the handsome, but far too agile, young man that decorated the opposite wall.

"Paul," said his wife, "that shirt is awfully threadbare. Could I get you another, dear? Really, you look rather like bum, Paul."

Paul had little concern for the way he

dressed. Though his closets burgeoned with fine clothes of every weight and cut, he liked the pliant feeling of soiled trousers, and worn shirts. And anyway, neither he nor Ivonne went anywhere, but to town. And they rarely entertained. Yet Ivonne looked crisp and nearly chic, though she lived as singularly an isolated life as did her husband.

"No dear, thank you. I'm fond of this shirt. You know that," said Paul, exhaling thick shoots of smoke with every word.

"Honestly, you smoke too much darling. I'm quite sure, Paul, that Prince Borovsky died from smoking cigarettes. Of course they were Russian, very strong, I believe." Ivonne punctuated each phrase with a nervous, but peremptory pursing of her red lips. Anxiety and dogmatism seemed to struggle in her eyes. Sometimes they would be soft and searching, blinking often. Later their blue was cold and steely, and they would blink less frequently.

Purposefully inhaling the cigarette smoke more deeply than usual, and then blowing it out his nose and mouth, Paul made a filmy smoke screen around his head.

"This Russian, what's-his-name, don't know quite what you're talking about," mumbled Paul, who then snapped at the sardine that was impaled on the end of the silver fork.

"You never listen, Paul," said Ivonne sorrowfully, yet with her dogmatic eyes wide open. "He was a man, one of the many, I might add, who rather fancied me when we were in Paris. And now he's gone. At any rate, you do smoke too much," she reiterated as fine tears clustered at the corners of her now softened but anxious eyes.

Borovsky died three years ago. So many of her admirers were gone. There was the Duke and there was Thomas Wayne.

He had liked older women. She should have been so right for him. He was a strange boy. Yes, she was admired. Once. But only if her son, Karl, had admired her more. Then the others might not have been so important. Ivonne thought and thought while chewing the bit of steak the maid had specially cooked for her. Very healthy, she thought. Of course, one can't live forever. They say it might get dull. Well? Paul is so young...

Like falling leaves, Paul's and Ivonne's conversation swayed from one seemingly insignificant point to another, and with coffee and the familiar biscuits, it fell slowly, rustled slightly, and settled in silence. Ivonne stared at her husband's fraying collar, while his attention wandered some distance from the immediate surroundings. Visions of a gaudy, multi-eyed fish foundered in the recesses of his mind. Left by the sea on arid gravel, the fish flipped and flapped its graceful body only to find itself farther from the receding brine. The fish's suffering and determination hurt and awed Paul, but all his sympathies could do nothing to put an end to its unceasing efforts to return to the sea. It was a startlingly beautiful specimen and its beauty seemed heightened by the struggle. To capture that color, that form, that attitude in a paroxysm of agony was for Paul a challenge that might be answered by incising lines on a copper plate, applying ink, and his mastery of the technical aspects of this medium. Paul glanced at Ivonne, who was silently masticating a biscuit with great thoroughness. He then pushed himself away from the table, and left—the fish's pains having etched a frown upon his face...

Paul diligently swallowed the last mouthful of warm milk that Ivonne insisted he drink before going to sleep. He set the tall glass down on the night table, pushed his head back into the soft-

ness of the pillow, and let his eyes run back and forth, tracing invisible matrice on the white ceiling.

"Paul, you know? You know I'd rather like getting out of the house sometime this week... Just for an evening. A few hours, perhaps," Ivonne added hesitantly already sensing her husband's recalcitrance to leave his plot of ground, his home, his place of work. And it was simply subtle wince, an infinitesimal grimace, a silent squint of irritation that urged Ivonne to qualify her desire.

Paul uttered a dry, skeptical "maybe as if his small mouth were filled with the down in his pillow. His arm reached mechanically for the light on the table between his and Ivonne's bed. And Ivonne sensed an inexplicable twinge of anger as the brightness faded and the solid, shiny furnishings and the flowered wallpaper disappeared in the blackness...

It was morning, and fresh light seemed to careen off the mahogany table into Paul's ashen face. He rubbed at the sleep-speckled creases under his eyes before pushing a cigarette between his dry lips. Ivonne silently declined to make known her disapproval. She looked pinched and wan, which was not her usual aspect. The fibrous network of nerves that seemed wedged between her thin skin and firm flesh had been drawn taut and brittle by the view of the hand of death. Its moist claw had scraped old George Elwanger—"the late oil magnate..."—as the obituary in the Trib put it. Only a few weeks ago his hoarse grunt had been audible over the phone. Ivonne scowled at the newspaper both in foreboding and in the hope that Paul would show the concern that such an expression ought, it seemed, to elicit.

The old Zippo clanked open at the command of Paul's slender thumb. The tip of his cigarette crackled slightly as he drew the first long puff. A sweet-acrid



Lynn Whisnant

mist of smoke tainted with the residues of lighter fluid and stale breath attenuated the lines of Ivonne's frown. She nevertheless fed the flames of despair and increased the heat of a pervasive sorrow that seemed to parch her innards.

The scrambled eggs cooled and congealed on Ivonne's plate as she tried desperately to fathom the tenacity with which Paul apparently pursued insensibility. Certainly she was no savior, although gossip had once attributed to her that role. She had not rescued him from the bleakness of Hoboken. She thought she had loved him. That was sufficient. Some said it was her own fall that prompted her to dust the grime from his threadbare lapels, yank him from a bank-teller's window, and send him to art school. Then he found something in painting that his benefactress and, yes, lover, could not give him. But they had a son. Why was there nothing for him in the boy? Oh, god, the boy. And did not Paul at least owe her—she hated the word, but somehow could not avoid using it—owe her the decency of some kind of concern?

Ivonne poured herself half a cup of coffee from the silver pot that had been her mother's and her mother's mother's. She felt simultaneously contemptuous and proud of such heirlooms. The contempt she never verbalized. But she seemed to enjoy telling stories about the history of these antiques and about the people that had passed them on to her. Thus, the pride she made known.

Some had made fortunes while others had distinguished themselves in the arts. And Ivonne, when relating the dated tales in her inimitable pursed-lipped, brow-raised fashion, could not resist telling of her own near success, of her training and practice as a singer.

"But my de-ah," she would sing out in a quasi-upper-class British accent, "my

voice was simply superb." And those that remembered acknowledged that it had been. For she was not one to boast, and only flattered herself when pressed on by friends or relatives. And she would continue, smiling spontaneously, less the usual tightness, if it were clear that someone appreciated her story of the past.

"From the time I was a small child, was told I had a rather more than sufficient amount of talent to become a first lady of the opera. Yes, Rose Montalatto herself told me just that when I was fourteen. At the same time I was taking voice, Marrión was relentlessly approaching stardom on the stage in London." Marrión was Ivonne's aggressive, but clearly less talented older sister. Ivonne could never escape mention of her when looking back on her own trials.

What with the proper encouragement and an attentive audience, Ivonne's voice would reshape the past for hours. The slight creases on her forehead would gradually retract and her sharply arched brow would fall into a relaxed curve, accentuating the beauty of her large eyes. These rare exhibitions gave her pleasure though only up to a certain point. Because, in the end, she felt compelled, both by her honesty and the knowledge that Paul would complete the story if she did not, to reveal her early failure. One did not need to listen, though her sonorous but slightly hoarse voice was captivating in order to predict the import of the climax.

The threads of worry would slowly sever themselves back into her high forehead. Her brows would bend like the backs of two angry cats. And her eyes would dim perceptibly as she approached the story of her humiliating crisis on stage. Then she would cry and curse her sister. Paul would calm her down, though not tenderly. Then she would swear never to tel

the story again, but she would forget the pain it caused, and as if responding to the yells of an encore, could not resist to perform again.

The eggs were now an opaque yellow gelatin, flecked with spots of dirty-white yolk. Ivonne carefully set her china cup on the gold-ringed saucer and rang for the cook. She thought she must go to her dressing room. A hot bath. Her hair. The usual sorting and organizing. Perhaps dip into that book about Paris in the Twenties. So much to do. But so little time in which to do it all.

The metallic clink of Paul's lighter drew Ivonne out of her contemplation of the day's schedule and into the realm that circumscribed both herself and her husband.

"Oh, Paul," she sighed, "I hope you're not going to be as busy as me today. I've got so much to do," she said, emphasizing the "much" with an exhalation of expected fatigue.

But of course she had little to do. The maid cooked and cleaned. The butler drove the cars and tended to them, as well as doing all sorts of jobs that required a strong arm. As a matter of fact, no one, including Paul, quite knew what Ivonne did with her time. It belonged to her alone.

"No end to my worries, no end to my work. I really must have more time," Ivonne would fretfully report to the nearly extinct old men that sometimes would call her up when Paul was busy in the studio.

"Guess we all have to earn our keep," said Paul with an unusual amount of sarcasm in his low voice. "I know you're pressed for time, Ivonne, but I really wish you'd do one thing for me today. Look, I hate to ask you this, but I... I simply can't stand that picture of Karl hanging here in the dining room. You always insist that I eat too little. Well, frankly,

I attribute it to him. I mean those damned eyes stuck there in that little girl's face are too much for me, Ivonne. I'm sorry, but it simply must go."

An oily, leaden ball seemed to slide into Ivonne's throat from nowhere, and a warm, stinging sensation came with the tears that filled her eyes. The drops plummeted from her high cheekbones into the cold eggs. Paul had never mentioned the picture before. They had never discussed Karl since *that* day. And as Paul's slippers beat a sort, irregular tattoo into the living room, and as his narrow back disappeared from sight, voices of the past were audible in Ivonne's ears and remembered forms passed before her mind's watery eye.

She saw the new stone chips that had filled the driveway. She felt the silence and knew again the anticipation with which she awaited Karl's arrival. The stone chips had clicked and crackled as Karl's bulbous convertible left the macadam and turned towards his parents' home. Ivonne had peered out of the bay window, nibbling anxiously at her upper lip with her lower front teeth. She felt again the dryness of her mouth and the desire to run to him and hold him to her.

She had always liked holding him, from the time he was a baby. Petting him, bathing him, feeding him. Yes, bathing him, that was what she liked best. To make the young skin shine like milk-colored marble. To scrub the body's every crevice and cranny, to clean him. She made him and thought he was hers.

Karl had gotten out of the car somewhat hesitantly. His friend, smaller and dark, had opened the other door, and trotted around the car to Karl's side. Ivonne had said nothing, but walked quickly to her son and kissed him firmly on the cheek.

"Mother, I'd like you to meet Rafe. Rafe, this is my mother."

Before extending his hand to Ivonne, Rafe had looked quickly into Karl's eyes. His glance, though passing swiftly, had been one of understanding, pathos and affection.

"So nice to meet you, Mrs. Bonard. I hope I'm not imposing."

"Not at all, my dee-ah," Ivonne had said, desperately trying not to show the resentment she instinctively felt for the young man, nor her immediate premonition of the violent complications that were to ensue.

Karl had dropped out of university in order to sift through his problems, whose solution he felt would be hastened by a change in venue. Thus, he luckily met Rafe, who had escaped abroad for similar reasons, on the French Riviera. After much deliberation and mutual soul-searching, the two decided to return to the United States and to face the obvious difficulties together. Buttressed by Rafe's confidence and affection, Karl decided to write to his mother, and to return to his home with Rafe in order, if not to salvage the wreckage of family, at least to make himself understood. And at a distance of 3000 miles the possibilities of some sort of reconciliation seemed real.

But Paul had found the letter, read it, and wept bitterly, alone. He told Ivonne he would not have people "of that ilk" as he so delicately put it, under his roof. "Damn my son and damn my seed," he whispered to himself in the studio the day he saw the letter.

Ivonne, her son, and Rafe had drunk together in the parlor, a dark room that adjoined the living room. Rafe had told of his months in France, where he spent time improving his grasp of the language. He planned to teach. Ivonne had tried to smile as she talked, but her lips grew turgid and straight as she looked at the beautiful young man who owned the

heart of her son. In Rafe's sweeping smile she had seen the affection she, too, felt for Karl. How odd, but she could not help it. She had been so happy to bear child just before the drought. And to save herself from the starkness of that desert from the past, and from Paul, she had thinned the blood of her son, had smothered him, she knew. She had looked at Rafe and again silently acknowledged his great beauty.

The silver water-pitcher, the crystal tumblers, the clock, the dustlessness. In these things Karl saw his parents as they had once been and as they still had to be. As the three drank and chatted, tense but amicable, Karl was sure Rafe knew what he was feeling. Because they had told each other everything about themselves. Because Karl had told Raphael the little details; of the polished heirlooms and the histories that seemed more enduring than the objects themselves.

Ivonne had daintily upended the pitcher, pouring a stream of water into the scotch in her glass. She had watched the clear liquid from the upturned vessel bubble and ripple at the bottom of her glass, changing the rusty liquor to the color of wheat. Raising her eyes, she had looked from Karl to Rafe, thought with horror of Paul's return from the studio and dryly said "Cheers."

Across the rich green lawn, only steps from the finery and the dustless, but time-shrouded grace of the immaculate house Paul sat, pensive, on a high stool. Below him the wooden boards were gleaming with the oil and paint that had found its way into them over the years. And he could have seen the bone-colored spot were he not at the mercy of the objects of his imagination. Now not only the multi-colored fish foundered in the ebb tide of his mind. There were also two black, somewhat amorphous crustaceans crawling

across the same parched sands upon which the fish continued to beat itself. Paul, who usually revelled in the creation of such bizarre images, was frightened by the fish and crab-like creatures. Especially the shelled things whose eyes glowed intensely on the end of their spiny feelers.

Paul lifted his head from between his moist palms and surveyed each corner of the studio, as if his looking around would chase the imagined marine life back into the sea. There were books and stacks of frames in one corner. There were reams of paper and towers of copper plates in another. Unfired clay sculpture was in another. In the fourth corner there was an unfinished table. On it there were slender brushes and mounds of exotic color, some dried and cracked, others moist and sweet. And connecting the four corners was the floor. And to Paul the floor's slick surface seemed to stretch from the outer extremities of the room and to converge on the center; the boards literally seemed to race towards the dry spot, towards the blemish in the middle of the room.

Paul sat on the stool, unmoving, his grey eyes arbitrarily lifted towards the many-paned window that seemed to sift and cool the light that filtered through it. The imaginary fish twitched a twitch of awful frustration and agony. Rather than escaping the objects of his mind, Paul now sought to divide them and to freeze them in a suspended animation.

Ivonne had left the table and was soaking in the warmth of steaming green bathwater. Though she wanted to dream of Antibes and Juan les Pins as they had been thirty years ago, Ivonne could not rid herself of thoughts of Karl and Rafe. And they never would have crossed her mind were it not for Paul. Ivonne made up her mind never to take the picture down, even . . . even if she had to die to keep it there.

Ivonne looked at the silent electric clock on the bathroom window sill and wondered how long it would be before the artist would drag his temperamental feet up the stairs to change for dinner. And then she remembered that she had had the very same thought the day she and Karl and Rafe were sitting in parlor. Karl had been becoming increasingly nervous. Ivonne could tell because Karl had clenched his fist spasmodically every time before he picked up his glass. And he could not say anything, but had simply flexed the muscles in his jaw whenever he made a fist.

"Oh, that must be your father, Karl," Ivonne had piped when she finally heard a door bang closed. It was the cellar door so she had said she would go downstairs to see what he was up to. She had excused herself and gone for Paul.

Ivonne carefully descended the slippery wooden stairs into the half-darkness of the cold cellar. Hearing the high "Whirr" of one of the machines in Paul's shop, she had turned a corner and felt her way along the brick wall until she saw a yellow light. Paul, powdered with the fine chips of wood that flew from the object spinning on the lathe, stood nearly ankle deep in sawdust and metal filings.

Ivonne informed her husband that their son had arrived.

"I know the little bugger is here. I will not go upstairs," Paul had growled. Drops of perspiration fell from his forehead onto the wood, which he still poked at with his chisel. The sweat spun dark threads around the spinning object.

"And what is more, Ivonne, those boys, as you call them, will not stay under this roof tonight or any other night. I didn't bring him up. He's no damn son of mine."

Paul had been shouting at the top of his voice. Karl could hear. Ivonne cried,

choking. She wanted to hit Paul, but could not see where he stood. Paul smashed the chisel down onto the candlestick that was spinning on the lathe. There was a loud rending and cracking of the hard walnut cylinder. Splinters and chunks sprayed from the machine like shrapnel. A fragment buried itself in Ivonne's thigh. When she had seen the fuzzy patch of blood seeping through her wool dress she stopped crying.

Ivonne looked through the clear green bath-water. On her pink thigh there was a thick scar, raised, puffy and milkwhite. She felt chilled even though the water still steamed. She made up her mind not to cry. But when the thought of how Karl had left and never returned, it was with great difficulty that she swallowed. The last thing she had heard from him was... well, she had better not think of it now. She might lose control.

So she did not dawdle any longer in the tub, for there was the afternoon before her and there was much to be done. Ivonne dried herself carefully, powdered, and brushed her long, youthful hair the customary one hundred strokes. She dressed in a dark silk blouse and a pair of black slacks. Then she proceeded to sort through a box of old papers and clippings, engagements and invitations yellow with age.

Ivonne sat cross-legged and bent-backed on the thick brown rug in her dressing room. She stared blankly at the packets of letters, folders, odd envelopes and newspaper clippings. Slipping one of the letters out of a ribboned stack, she strained her ears in order to hear the comforting crackle of the curled, flaking paper. "... thoughts of our glorious hours in Dover distract me again and again from the tasks before me..." she read in a bold, faced hand. The trip to Dover had doomed an up and coming literary critic to haunting, un-

settling thoughts of a life without Ivonne's attentions. "Forget me not," he once wrote, but she was already busy currying young Paul. But Paul was not made. No, was he softened by the staying, for good, on her fickle heart. She cried softly, yet failing to produce tears enough.

Ivonne knew that looking over the clippings would unsettle her. But she felt she must.

A.P.—N.Y., N.Y. Last night city police arrested Karl Bonard, 23 year old son of Paul Bonard, on morals charges...

Paul had given her the article and insisted she keep it.

Ivonne's lower lip twitched and shuddered. Her eyes felt heavy and they stung her. She dreamt that a sodden clot of black blood was lodged in her stomach and that it had a thousand cold tentacles that were hardening in all her extremities.

Her bones cracked dryly as she stood up and turned her narrow back on the graveyard of packets and memories. She walked slowly into her spotless bathroom, admired her hair in the mirror, and clicked open the medicine cabinet. In place of her pale face were rows of orderly bottles of skin creams, vitamins, tooth powder, shampoo... She reached and carefully pulled out a bottle that was wedged between a skin preparation and a hair conditioner. She thought she must have sleeping pills. They were pretty red and pretty blue. She was tired and harried. She must sleep, she thought. For there was nothing to do.

Ivonne lay in bed, very still. Her skin looked as smooth and cool as the sheets. With her eyes closed, she seemed at peace.

Paul stretched, breathed deeply, and descended from the high stool. He began to pace the length of the gleaming floor excitedly, his rubber heels squeaking softly. The fish had shuddered and stopped. It

neatly translucent body was not relaxed, but frozen during a beautiful, harrowing twitch of anger and despair. With bright pastel Paul hurriedly drew a series of sketches which, for the first time, he felt might be the beginning of his finest work.

Having finished the sketches, Paul hurriedly left the studio. When he did

something he thought was good, he always liked to leave it as soon as he finished. But he looked forward to seeing it the next day. A fresh glance, and he would know its worth, thought Paul plodding up the incline that separated the house from the studio. And Paul's thoughts entered the house, where he hoped the picture of Karl was no longer hanging.

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FOR ANDREW WYETH

This country was half-barren,
Empty of any color, sound of
Restless birds downward sliding
To the watery leaves, or even wind,
Biting at the grass, the single, bending
Board along the path; only light, killing
The whitened cliff and faded barn.
He offered color, wind, and whistling
Of dark wings above the trees;
The brown wood melted on the leaning grass.
White made a fine madness in him,
Grasping at the chalky slope, desiring
To bring the world to whiteness.
The long American face looking from
A window of the land out to the land
Was an echo of his own.

THE KILL

The night assumes the color of the bird
Trembling in that distant wood,
Leafy wings from the brown trunk raised
And held for flight.

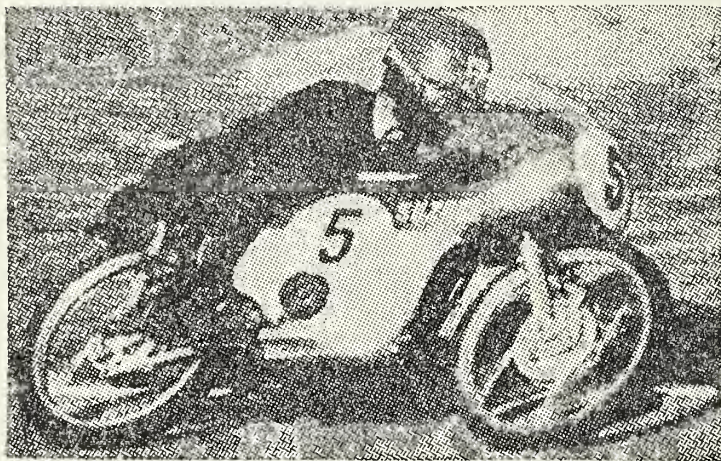
The furred hood
Pulses in the grass—owl hurls across the sky
And now drives downward, quickly fastens
To the startled eye.

The long trees shiver
And the quiet arm of night
Strokes the last pale light from the bloody stones.

NOSTRA COSA

The grass was cut
last time I went there.
Everything was
deranged (they even
cleared
away our magic sticks).
An aardvark
hid its head,
the redbirds didn't sing
(you said not to go
back)—but
remember touching the
clouds (it almost rained) and how
the sun filled the sky (we saw him
blush and wink "good-bye"). With you
I learned about eating purple peppers,
flowers, seeds, mushrooms,
tasting sweet puffs of wind
fresh from the sea.
Moonbeams licked between our
toes as we followed the
lizard tracks down.
Tell me again that
there is now
nothing.

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SAVE SAVE SAVE

pleasant atmosphere

“WHAT PROFIT HATH A MAN...?”

I hadn't made a sale all week, and it looked like it was going to be another bad day. I sell photo albums for the Family Album Company, and Durham is my territory. And pretty lousy territory, too, let me tell you that. For instance, now, the first place I went to this morning, this pretty cute little broad answered the door with a kid on her arm, and before I could get through my door-opener, she said, "If you're selling anything, I might as well tell you, my husband is dead." What could I do? I just said "Thank you," and went away. That's the first time I ever hit that rebuttal, and what can you say to something like that? Not that I believed her. The little bitch had just discovered a good way to get rid of salesmen.

I had a lead to a place down the street. It was a pretty cheap-looking block, with sand in the yards instead of grass, but the houses had been there long enough to have some trees growing around them. There were a lot of junky kid's toys made of plastic out in front of the houses. The guys that live on streets like that, they put out a dollar ninety-eight for some piece of crap for their kid, and then they feel generous as hell. I like to work that kind of neighborhood because you find alot of

mullets living there, and if you make them believe they're getting a bargain, they'll buy the Empire State Building. Also, you find the kind of people that buy a family Bible with a picture of Jesus on the front cover. If I ever see one of those Bibles lying on a table, I say to myself, "Niece baby, you got yourself a sale."

My lead took me to a white house that looked like it was dumped out of a sack instead of built. Out front was a '53 Ford with no front bumper and a flat tire, and which probably didn't have an engine either. As I walked up to the door, I saw a sign tacked onto a tree which said "Building Permit. Edgeton Realty is hereby entitled to enlarge house located 101 Oak Street from a three-family dwelling to a four-family dwelling. Building code section 495, paragraph D." I checked the address. My lead was to a family that had just had a baby. There were two front doors, and I picked the one on my left. Through the screen I saw a girl ironing shirts. I couldn't see her face until she came to the door. She would have been pretty if she had worn some makeup, and if it weren't for the receding chin. I gave her a grin. A big grin in the best door opener in the world. "Hey, there," I said

"You're the folks that have the new baby, aren't you?"

She said, "Yes," but she wouldn't smile.

"Fine," I said, grinning hard. "I've got a real nice surprise for you, sent out by the company. Have you got a few minutes?"

"Well, what's the surprise?" she said.

"If I told you that, it wouldn't be a surprise," I said. (You never tell 'em what it is at the door.)

"Well, ordinarily I don't let people in, but my husband's at home today, so I guess it's okay." She opened the screen about an inch and I helped myself in. I figured her husband weighed three hundred pounds and drove a garbage truck. He would either be a complete bastard, or he'd be real sentimental. They had a living room suite from Sears, and I sat down on the couch. The coffee table was too low, as usual. I looked around for a Bible or a set of encyclopedias. The only books in sight were a battered dictionary and a still more battered Bible on the coffee table and a pile of magazines called *The True Word*. "Uh, oh," I figured. "I've got a couple of religious nuts on my hands." The girl looked uneasy, and she wasn't saying anything, but only sitting and looking at me, with her bare right foot laid on top of the other one. I looked at her legs and decided he needed a shave.

"I see they're going to move another family in here with you all," I said. I usually gab a little to make them more curious about why I'm there, and to put them at their ease.

"Yes," she said. "They're going to fix up the basement and put someone else down there."

"That'll make it pretty crowded, won't it?"

"Yeah." She still had that lifeless expression she was wearing when I saw her at the door. The curtains were drawn,

the room was dark, and her face looked gray like a photographic negative.

"How old is yer all's baby?"

"Two weeks."

"Gee, you're up and around pretty soon. Most gals are still in bed two weeks after they've had a baby. Doesn't ironing tire you out?"

"I do all right." I paused to see if she would go on, but she wouldn't. People like that intrigue me because I always want to see if I can make them talk, get them interested in something. I decided to mention my wife's pregnancy. That always gets 'em.

"We're expecting a baby here before too long," I said. "Twentieth of October."

"Oh." That's all she said. Just, "Oh." That teed me off. Most everyone asks if it's our first one.

I don't know how I could have sat in that room so long and not noticed the pictures on the walls. I guess I hadn't noticed them because they were so big. It looked like the walls were made of pictures, all of Bible characters. "Hey, those pictures are real nice," I said. "Where did you get them?"

"Oh, those are Jim's. He paints," she said. Her voice showed about as much pride as if she were describing her hernia operation.

"Gee, those are good. Does he take courses in painting?"

"No, he never had a lesson in his life. He taught himself."

"You must be real proud," I said, still trying. "I guess I've got Michelangelo on my hands," I said to myself. There must have been a dozen large paintings and drawings on the walls, and there was a stack of them in the corner. There were a couple of crucifixes, in bright color. The crucifixes looked like he had copied them out of an illustrated Bible story book. There were some madonnas, too, and they

all had the traditional golden glow behind Mary's head, and Jesus lying there with his eyes open and not crying, unlike any new baby *I've* ever seen. There was a Lord's Supper that he had copied from somewhere, because I know I've seen it in magazines. Those pictures weren't any more real than the big sunny smile I wear when I knock on a door. You could have those pictures in your living room for ten years and not even notice them.

But there was another group of pictures that didn't look copied, and I don't know how they could stand to sit in that room with those pictures and not stare at them all the time. That's how real they were. I looked over my right shoulder, and there above the couch was some prophet who looked like a bas-relief instead of a painting. His hair was blown back, like he had just whipped his head around to glare at someone in the crowd who had called him a name. His head was bald and mounting up his forehead were deep wrinkles which looked like grooves you make with a knife in soft cheese. The cords in his neck were swollen as if he had been shouting. His eyebrows were bushy and threatened to hang into his eyes, but his glance was so bright that it would have scorched the white hairs. There were about five pictures he had obviously done out of his own head, and they were all of angry men condemning someone. When you look at a picture like that it makes you ask yourself if you've done anything wrong recently. But there was something funny about them. You never see anybody like that in real life. They were so real, they weren't real. You know what I mean?

I figured I had a real mullet. Anybody who is that religious must be pretty sentimental. If they swallow all that Bible stuff they're a sure thing to swallow a sales pitch. So I said to his wife, "Well, I guess you're wondering what I'm here about."

"I'd better go and get Jim," she said.

Jim was carrying the baby when he came in. He looked the way Elijah would have looked at age thirty. Tall and gaun and wearing a tee shirt which showed his slim arms almost to the shoulders. His hands were extremely large, and cords of muscle stood out on his forearms under a light coat of long black hairs. His neck was thin, and the sinews stood out on either side of a large Adam's apple. His head was large, with thick black hair greased and combed straight back. His forehead had the same lines as the prophet on the wall. His long face, slack jaw, and dimly flickering eyes made him look stupid. I stood up, thinking what a typical country jake he was. "I'm Nick Orange," I said.

"Glad to meet you sir. Jim Davis." He folded himself like a carpenter's rule into a low chair.

"Mighty cute little baby you got there Jim," I said. I've gotten into the habit of using people's names a lot. No matter how religious a guy is, he loves to hear the sound of his own name. "Is it a boy or a girl?"

"He's a boy."

"Gee, I bet you're proud. Were you hopin' for a boy or a girl?"

"A boy. I told Linda here, I ain't got no use for a girl. If he ain't a boy, I don't want him. And the reason I want a boy is, I want him to be a preacher or a missionary. Yes, sir."

"Well, well. I know both of you are mighty proud," I said. He held the baby in his huge hand, and I thought of how a Chesapeake Bay Retriever can swim through the water with a dead duck in his powerful jaws and drop it in your hand and you won't find a single feather out of place on its back.

I decided I'd establish a little common ground before I went on with my pitch

I was looking at your magazine, here, *the New World*. It looks pretty interesting. What's it all about?"

"That magazine is by a man out in California. He reads the Bible and interprets from the book of Revelation what is going to happen, and he prophesies it in his magazine. Shore does."

"Oh, I see. I thought maybe this was one of your church publications. What church do you go to?" I said.

"We go to Free-Will Baptist Church. Yes, sir." These people I call on are always saying "sir" to me because of my hat and tie.

"I see. What do you do? Are you the minister there?"

"No, I'm a deacon. I preach sometimes. For my living, I'm a carpenter at the hospital," he said.

"I was noticing your art work here. Your wife tells me that you never went to school to learn how to paint."

"That's right. Sure is."

"That's mighty good."

"Yes, sir. Taught myself. A man doesn't need no education to glorify God. Take our preacher for instance. He was sixteen year old, and the Lord came to him and called him to be a minister of the Gospel. And that man couldn't read or write. But when he come up to take his teacher examination what they give him, the Lord he'p him. The Lord he'p him pass that test. He shore did. Yes, sir. Praise His name. Now he can read and write pretty good. His wife teach him a lot. 'Course, he can't read nothin' that's writ too fancy. But he can read his Bible pretty good. And a man don't need no education to praise the Lord, and to do the Lord's work. Shore don't."

"That's the truth," I said. I would have said "amen," but I couldn't quite get it out. I was afraid it would sound funny.

"You know," I went on, "the disciples weren't educated men."

"That's right," he said. "A lot of those professors out at Duke, now," he went on. "They've got a lot of education, but it shore don't do 'em much good."

"Uh, oh," I thought. "I've got him started now."

"No, sir. Doesn't do them any good. You know why? Because they don't know people. Sure don't. A man can have all the education in the world, and he won't be happy, because he don't know people. But if a man knows people, even if he don't have much education, that man can be happy. Yes sir. Shore can. And the Lord be praised."

"That's the truth," I said. I thought to myself, "That's how you can tell a real ignorant bastard. They're always proud of being ignorant." But before I could start my pitch, he interrupted.

"A lot of people don't pay much attention to their religion. Now, if I miss church one Sunday, then the next Sunday I don't feel as much like going to church. And if I miss church two Sunday's, then it's mighty hard to get up and go to church that third Sunday. And that's just the chance the devil's waitin' for. The devil is on every street corner. And he's quick to catch you when you slide back."

"That's the truth," I said. Then I hurried on. "Well, Jim and Linda, I'd better tell you what I'm here about." You can't spend all day talking to these people. My job is to get into a house, sell the album, and get out as soon as possible. I don't have time to listen to sermons. I've got all the religion I need. Anyway, these holy rollers can bend your ear by the hour if you let them. "You see," I went on, "I'm sent out to do advertising for the company. We'd like to sort of butter you up, try to get your future business. Now, here's the first thing you get," I said as I bent

over, opened my kit, and pulled out the big leather album. The album is the come-on. It always makes their eyes light up. "Now, this album is bound in genuine top-grain cowhide and stamped in twenty-three carat gold. The gold is inlaid so it can't get rubbed off. And you know how rough babies can be on things." Usually I get a smile from the mother at this point, so I looked at Linda. She had about as much expression on her face as some potatoes I've known. So I went on. "Now this album is washable from cover to cover. We call it 'peanut butter and jelly sandwich proof.' You'll find out what that means in a few years," I said, smiling at her, but she seemed to be looking at the empty doorway.

Jim interrupted me again. "I don't mean to be impolite," he said, "but the man selling albums has already been by. Linda, go and get the album, and the paper we signed. I want to show you the paper just so you'll know we aren't deceiving you. I'm not saying you're suspicious now. You understand."

Linda brought out an album identical to mine. The contract was from our rivals in town. "Yes," I said, "this album is a lot like ours, but it's not from our company. I know you'll enjoy it, though." "Well," I said to myself, "I knew he was a mullet. I just wish I had gotten here first." I got up.

"To tell you the truth now, and not meanin' no offense, we're kinda sorry we signed up for the album now," said Jim. "Sixty dollars is a lot to pay, and we got a lot of bills. Carpentry don't pay too well, neither. I reckon we'll pay it, though. We're honest folks, and we always pay our debts. Not meanin' no offense to you, now, but I wish fellas like you wouldn't come around sellin' stuff. Now this other fella that was here, he sold Linda the album

when I wasn't here. She signed for it and everything. I called him and tried to cancel the order, but he said that he had already turned it in, and that it was out of his hands. So I reckon we'll have to pay for it. I'm not sayin' that we won't enjoy havin' an album full of pitchur's Jimmy here. I'm not sayin' that at all. I know it's somethin' we'll treasure in our hearts in years to come. But I swear, I don't see how we're gonna pay for it now. Not meanin' no offense to you, now. I know you gotta make a livin' for yourself. You prob'ly got a wife and kid, too. I've been pleased to talk to you. You're a nice young fella."

I was busy packing up my case samples. "Christ," I thought. "Just what I've always wanted to be. A nice young fella." I headed out the door. "Well, nice talking to you, Jim, and Linda," I said. "Thanks for your time."

"Lord bless you," said Jim.

So I left Jim Davis alone in his house with the stern and unreal prophets, the stern and unreal wife, and the little baby who was going to be a preacher or a missionary. I wondered if he had slapped his wife around for buying that album.

I walked out to my car with my hat under my arm. Another dead end. I looked at my watch. Half an hour wasted and no sale yet today, so I decided to try the other side of town.

Guys like that irritate me. They'll take your ear off trying to save your soul, and all the time they're feeling so damn religious and pious. Most of the time they're so poorly educated they can't even talk right. I don't go to church much anymore, but I've sort of got my own religion. I believe if you live the best life you can and do your fellow man a good turn whenever you get the chance, you'll come out right in the end. But you don't catch n

ping around and preaching to people and
bring them to death like I was better than
them.

I wish that Davis guy would get into
the racket I'm in and go through what I
go through. You go around from house
to house, getting doors slammed in your
face, getting put off with phony excuses,
when all you're trying to do is make an

honest buck. And when you finally find a
good mullet, you find out someone's been
there before you. If Jim Davis would go
around trying to sell these damn albums,
he'd change his mind about people, he
wouldn't care about saving their souls.
That's one thing this job does for you.
You get so you can see people the way they
really are.

it's fun to eat at



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To L——

Strange things can happen when a love is pure:
I loved you purely—and I loved in vain,
Knowing that you loved someone else, and sure
As well that my too-introverted vein
And yours, the opposite, would never blend,
Would clash—but, still, I loved you. And I thought
How sweetly a touch of irony would lend
Itself to my self-pity if he brought
No love to you but filthy passion, this
Unknown unknowing lover whose tin pledge
You wear so faithfully, whose every kiss
Pushes my sanity more near its edge!

But then I saw him. What love really is,
Is this: I saw, and knew that you were his.



Howard Copeland



Howard Copeland



Howard Copeland



Howard Copeland

INTRODUCTION

I wonder what you are—that is, to me—
That you should bring about so great a change
In what I feel; that you should rearrange
The plot of every waking reverie
In which I find myself, not as I am,
But as I would be: well-loved, full mature—
But that is only dreaming. To assure
Myself that I could never give a damn
For what I do not love, I must insist
That everything is love that stirs my heart;
And thus I cannot bring myself to part
With anyone till love does not exist
And I can prove it so. It would not do
That I should not propose the same to you.

The Tides

The wind is ripping at the wild tufts of grass that blow on the dunes. The sand shifts and slides under our feet and flows across the round hills in soft brown sheets. A cold wind is blowing off the sea. The gulls are tossed and buffeted far above our heads. The sea stretches grey in a great curving arc and on the other side is Spain. Bennie holds my hand and I can feel him shaking slightly from the cold, from the wind that is blowing through his thin blue jacket. Far out in the water I can just see the dark fins of a school of dolphins, swimming north with the gulf stream. My eyes fill with tears.

Yesterday when we arrived the sun was still warm. I had to carry Bennie's suitcase all the way from the station because I could tell he was tired. He didn't say anything but he kept rubbing the back of his neck with his hand and looking at the ground and stopping to breathe at street corners. I must be very careful.

We had to go the whole length of the beach road to find our boardinghouse. It is old and white and the Victorian lace is beginning to drop off the edge of the balcony. It is the cheapest in the town because it doesn't have a beach of its own—you have to walk along the old boardwalk and down a flight of wooden steps to get onto the dunes.

The landlady's name is Mrs. Beazle and she told us we could sleep in the same bed for only five dollars a night because Bennie is only ten. She hugged his head to her bosom and called him a sweet tired thing and I could tell by the way he pressed his lips together that he was hating it. I could almost smell the stale warm power of her dry breasts.

Mrs. Beazle's husband was killed at the end of the second war—it was V.E. Day and the men in his camp were firing shells into the air and shooting off firecrackers and one hit him in the nose and there he was, killed, just like that. She has an eldest daughter Lilly who lives in Chicago and another poor child who died of the scarlet fever when she was just Bennie's age and another daughter Jenny who sells tickets for the Bingo game at the amusement fair at night.

Our room is on the third story. It is small and dark and in the center is a big double bed with twin knit-lace doilies on the pillows. Above the bed there is a print of Pocahontas saving John Smith and under it there is a bracket that holds flowers but that Mrs. Beazle has draped with artificial ivy. There is a little desk with a notepad and several pencils and beside it a spindle with a pile of notes that Mrs. Beazle attached. The notes are

ank her for the lovely stay and a great any of them say God Bless You.

I helped Bennie undress and tucked him to the bed. Before he went to sleep he asked me if we could walk to the water when he woke up and I said we could if he still felt up to walking. I unpacked our bags then and set them in the corner of the room. I smoothed Bennie's shirts out with my hands. His body was very small and he lay underneath the covers. The arm that I saw across the plaid blanket was pure white.

I watched the waves from the window while he slept. The tide was going slowly out and I could see the new patches of seaweed and a dead fish that were left behind. Bennie slept for a long time; it was almost dark when he awoke. We had about half hour before Mrs. Beazle's dinner for the boarders.

The gulls were coming to rest on the crests of the waves. We watched them dropping their long beaks down for fish. Our feet were hollow and lonely on the quiet boardwalk—no one comes to this part of the beach, especially not when the sun has gone down and water is grey and the wind is coming up from the sea.

The boardwalk is rotting and the salt-stained planks are beginning to drift away. Down below there are vast caves formed by the long supporting timbers of the boardwalk and the hills of sand. The sand has drifted into some and comes up almost over the edge. Bennie knelt by the edge and bent under to look. He wanted to run down and explore under the boardwalk but it was getting dark and the wind was still rising. I took him by the hand and we ran all the way back to Mrs. Beazle's.

She was just getting the dinner on. Her face was flushed and hot from the kitchen and she beamed when she saw us. The other boarders were reading the evening paper in the parlor; I could hear them

rustling and chattering through the half open door. I could barely see two old ladies working on a giant jigsaw puzzle by the lamp in the corner.

When we sat down to supper she didn't put Bennie next to me. Across the table there was a large woman with two boys—I think they must be between twelve and fourteen. The had dark hair and plaid shirts and Mrs. Beazle proudly put Bennie beside them. She told the large woman that here was a nice little boy down for a few weeks with his sister and that it was nice to have all the youngsters together. I was frightened when they turned toward Bennie; I watched them all through the meal and saw them poke each other in the ribs and whisper to him in his ear. I would ask him what they said when we were alone.

I saw Mrs. Beazle's daughter Jenny at dinner. She was so fat she spilled over the sides of the chair and could barely squeeze her stomach up to the table enough to eat without dribbling. Mrs. Beazle scolded her soundly whenever she dropped a bit of food or failed to pass the plates when asked. Jenny smiled vacantly when spoken to.

When the meal was over Mrs. Beazle laid her hand over mine and smiled warmly at me. Then she looked at Jenny and said that Jenny would be so pleased to take us to the amusement fair with her tonight in her car. The amusement fair was where just everyone went at night, she said. I wanted to tell her that we were too tired, but Bennie looked at me pleadingly and I said yes we would go but only for an hour or so because my little brother was here to rest. Mrs. Beazle smiled at us warmly.

We left after dinner. Jenny put us both in the front seat with her, and drove us slowly down the beach road. She watched the road carefully and once in a while looked at Bennie. She said nothing to us.

The amusement fair is at the end of town with the two hotels. It is just off the road and down by the beach; once in a while you can hear the cry of the water over the shrieks and music.

We held hands tightly and Jenny cleared her throat and softly told us that she had to report to the Bingo booth. Music throbbed at us from the flowing horses of the Merry-go-Round. Their heads were bent back and they bared long white teeth with their pulled lips. A long strip of light ripped across the center lane. In the shadows the husky low voices of women and barkers dragged out to us.

Bennie tugged at my hand, he pulled me toward a dusky alcove where a barker was grinding out the tale of a headless man and a cast of Adults Only dancing girls. His lips were pulled back too. His teeth were long and yellow and he held the stub end of a cigar stuffed far back between them. He wasn't old but his face was creased and pock-marked. He looked at me and smiled with his mouth. Then he pursed it up and made little short kissing sounds. The group of men who were standing outside the tent poked each other.

Bennie was looking at the posters of the dancing girls. They were half nude and had great swaying breasts and red open mouths. I called to him and he turned away. We walked together back out into the light.

Three or four booths away down the center strip I saw the Bingo booth. Perhaps we could watch Jenny spin the wire cage with the bingo numbers falling and tumbling in it. We didn't see her at first, but Bennie pointed and there she was, at the back. She had put on a pair of big gold earrings and had loosened her hair. There was a smear of red lipstick across her mouth and on her eyes two swoops of black—she had put on false eyelashes. Her

great weight shook as she giggled coy at the jokes the men threw at her.

She saw us. Her gaze dropped and turned away. A slow angry red crept around her neck. I took Bennie's hand again and softly tugged him away.

We left Jenny then and wandered led up into the sawdust lights. We had money for food, cotton candy for Bennie or even a yellow pinwheel, and as I walked I tried to separate the sounds of the music from the wail of the dancing girls' music.

We stopped to rest against the side of a wooden toss-the-ring booth. From the shadows the barker with the pitted face I felt his hand, yellow and covered with hairs, close around my arm. And I knew Bennie had run behind me, pressed against the back of my legs. I looked at his eyes. They were half-closed. He laughed and let go.

We ran back, and I was pulling Bennie sobbing breathlessly down the road. He made him keep up and I could hear him gasping. The last few blocks I picked him up in my arms.

We sat for a long time on the edge of the bed, not looking at each other. Finally I got up and turned out the light. We were dressed in the dark. When we were lying under the covers I could feel him breathing heavily beside me. He was very quiet for a long time and I went to sleep.

I had a dream. In the dream we were there again, at the fair. And all the time there was Jenny's face, floating above us, but it was pale and lidless, and was dripping tears. Under the vague and misty light a crowd of boys was walking with Bennie, they had their arms through his, they were giggling in his ear, they were slowly showing him things under the cover of their hands. He drifted far away in the crowd, I was left alone with a painted face and bleary eyes against a fencepost. The barker came to me. We linked arms

d floated down out of the lights into the
 rm shadowed tents. He led me inside
 d held me tightly, squeezed me hard
 t I choked. He breathed into my
 uth and was on me, heavy and ir-
 istible, drowning me in his waves of
 ath.

woke and felt for Bennie and he was
 there. I threw on my coat and tread
 ly into the hall. The floor creaked with
 ry step. Mrs. Beazle's little antiques
 led on the tables and I was lost and
 ure of the doors, which led to the
 rs and which led to the other boarders.
 essed and I was right and I ran down
 stairs and out onto the porch. The
 ging white lace was dimly lit by the
 on. The sand was dark. I ran out a few
 os with my bare feet; I could feel the
 sh sandy grass bite into my toes.

The shapes were all dark, I could distin-
 sh no form. I couldn't keep the tears
 of my crying voice and the wind
 pped it away across the sand and over
 water.

started down the boardwalk, gripping
 planks with my bare feet. I ran down
 steps and looked up and down the
 h. There was no sound except for the

wind washed waves. But far down the
 beach there was a tiny flicker of light. I
 walked toward it, my feet sliding in the
 sand. The backs of my legs ached.

He was there, underneath the board-
 walk, in one of the sand-hollowed caves.
 He was with the two boys of the boarding-
 house. They had built a small fire. The
 light shone and washed against their pale
 bare skin. They were very silent.

I stood in the shadows. My heart was
 pounding in my throat, echoing the sound
 of the sea. I turned and walked back up
 the beach.

In the morning I packed our bags to
 leave in the afternoon and woke him up
 to go out on the beach for the last time
 with me. We said little to each other.

Bennie, Bennie, the tide's coming in—
 pick up your pail and bucket and run
 with me along the frothy waves—the little
 crabs will come to bite your toes, the silver-
 speckled fishes will nibble at your ankles—
 so take my hand and run a sea race down
 the sand. . .

Wide and scooped, the sand lies next to
 the sea. Three pebbles lie scattered on the
 wrinkled edge. We bury them in the
 sand with our toes.



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THE
BLUE AND WHITE
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The Fishermen

For a broom to whisk away the spiders
That spin the matted cobwebs of my mind—
To swab the sores and fevers of dry autumn
And breathe fresh pains into mankind
That might excite bold cravings toward a day
When tides and winds that vex the fisherman
Have fled down gutters with the blood away—
From hope-filled men who'll sit, their feet in sand,
And dangle on a pole with hook and bait
For endless wantings as they wait and wait.

A man from his crotch spits
Into the wretchedness of a mother's womb—
Begets a parasite that sucks and gnaws—
Swells and ruptures the pouch.
A gut of a man is born—a consumptive tube
That chews its blind way
Groveling in the fecal clods of humanity.
He stretches his crumpled wings—flapping,
And flies throbbing through the darkness
Driven to candles and honey.
Then on summer days, glutted and singed,
He lies humming a monotonous hymn to himself
That echoes about in the hollow tomb of his mind
Like a thought on padded feet
That marches whistling dixie
From the tunnel of time.
The horn of plenty blows a dirge
For the dead soldiers, hobbled and maimed,
Who for old glory lie wrinkled and drawn
Still thirsting and spitting dry pith.

Prim Sally turns up her nose
And smugly ponders nothing—
Glum and bored with all the stimulation,
She scratches where it itches
And bites her nails awhile.

I thought a poet was. . . .
I thought myself a poet

And formed myself to fit the present times.
 But I'm left standing by too many stances in too many places
 And I feel nothing
 Hear nothing but my mind
 Moving upon the silence
 Like a long-legged fly.
 My words stay words
 Hanging in my mind,
 The sterile attic,
 The rag and bone shop,
 Stuffed with straw—
 Thrust not once but every moment into life
 With fingers thick and blunt.
 The moment slips away
 And I see nothing but a stranger
 Who's lived what was my life I think
 While I make tracks across the paper
 And try to catch the animal
 Or the spirit—or anything.
 "I think, therefore I am"
 But that is all
 Like all the other flies
 That do not struggle all their lives
 To disclose or know themselves,
 But to find out why they seek
 And why they hope
 And why they want to live
 A life of twitches.

Prim Sally turns up her nose
 And smugly ponders nothing—
 Glum and bored with all the stimulation,
 She scratches where it itches
 And bites her nails awhile.

The old cat scrounges in a garbage heap for scraps—
 Paws and licks a soaked and clotted rag.
 She crouches purring in the ashes warm—
 Too lean to move and stretch the mangy fur
 Across the stiff weak bones.
 With wild eyes she watches
 Mice who come to revel
 On the remnants tatters bits of meat
 That reek with rotten odors
 Mixed with smoke and fume that float about the rubble
 Hanging low as if to drop or rain.

I'll say it once again—and yet again.
As I walk through the valley
I fear no evil.
My limbs don't shudder
Like the faces of old women praying,
The stench blows through all things
And I breathe deeply
Lone and unafraid.
I turn my tired eyes away
From myself and others
Who stand marching all together
Singing happy songs to cheer our dying souls.
Good god, dead god,
We whimper all together—
Disturbing silence with our raspy voices,
Jerky movements—spasms,
Spilling hope in semen on the earth—
On pages of moth-chewed immortal books—
Devouring with our bodies eyes and minds
Any morsel of eternity
That will let us draw another gasp.

Prim Sally turns up her nose
And smugly ponders nothing—
Glum and bored with all the stimulation,
She scratches where it itches
And bites her nails awhile.

For a broom to whisk away the spiders
That spin the matted cobwebs of my mind—
To swab the sores and fevers of dry autumn
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Ecumenism

The three co-chairmen of the United Religions' Institute for the New Ecumenism (U.R.I.N.E.) were just finishing up a pre-planning session for the Southern Regional Convention of their organization. It was late Friday night and their office on the tenth floor of a large office building in Atlanta was the last one to be emptied. The men represented the three major denominations; Protestant (in this case, Presbyterian), Catholic, and Jewish; all were shepherds of large congregations of their respective faiths.

The Presbyterian's name was Robert Bruce. He was a tall lean man almost devoid of a sense of humor, but making up for this lack with a truly magnificent sense of righteousness and duty. The priest's name was Patrick O'Brian, a stocky muscular man who loved to laugh as much as a friend loved to preach. The rabbi was Alexander Bernstein whose main affectation was a love of large words, but otherwise his temperament and physique was somewhere in-between his two companions.

They were sitting around a circular table, facetiously called, "The Round Table" by Father O'Brian. It was Rabbi Bernstein who was speaking:

Gentlemen, we must and we will have a successful convention. Now that all the

plans have been laid and we have had a chance to sit back and evaluate them, it seems that this event will bring a new era in understanding between the people of the various denominations, especially of this area, and hopefully to others as well."

Dr. Bruce (they all had doctorates, of course) continued, "I agree, Alex. This should help us all understand each other through our common efforts to understand our relation to God and his world. Once we put ourselves right with God, we shall be right with each other."

Father O'Brian added, "Yes, definitely, and I think that our slogan for this convention, 'The Lord is *Our* Shepherd' sums up this feeling quite well." He smiled and nodded in satisfaction, then pushing his seat back from the table, he said, "Yes, I think we've done it. Let's call it a night."

The others nodded in agreement and they all got up from the table and walked over to where their hats and coats were hanging by the door.

The Rabbi opened it and motioned to the Priest, "After you, Pat."

Pat smiled and shook his head, "I believe I was first last week. Bob, after you," and he bowed low.

The minister shook his head and said that it certainly wasn't he that should go through and that, "By all means Alex

should go ahead," since he had, "Already opened the door, anyway."

They stood there a few seconds, smiling at each other, when from out in the corridor came a voice: "I hates to bother you gennulmen, but it is awf'ly late an' I has to get t'mah ole' lady." It was Hosea the colored elevator operator. The owners of the building had kept their original elevators rather than install self-service ones in an effort to keep a personal touch, and Hosea had been running the same elevator for forty yeras.

In a sort of Pavlovian reflex action they all started through the door. After they untangled themselves and got up off the floor, they tried again and made it, although just barely.

Dr. Bruce was the first one to the elevator with O'Brian placing and Bernstein showing. "Lawdy, Lawdy, gennulmen. You all must've been workin' some pow'rful hard in there. Why It's well on t' two o'clock in the A.M." Hosea shook his head and tsked-tsked his admiration at all that energy and also his annoyance at having to wait around for so long.

The three clergymen stepped into the elevator in the order of their arrival. Once inside they removed their hats. Hosea closed the doors and they started down. Bernstein picked the light bulb to stare at on the way down, while O'Brian read the inspection sticker and Bruce focused on the little brass plate proclaiming to one and all that this was an Otis elevator and that its capacity was two thousand pounds.

"Yas suh," repeated Hosea, "You gennulmen was really burnin' the midnight oil."

O'Brian tore himself away from the inspection certificate and looked at Hosea. Hosea was not quite five feet one and that together with his dried up wrinkled little body made him look like a close relative of Rameses II's mummy. He cleared his throat, "Why yes, Hosea, indeed we have.

We have been working very hard, someday the results of our labors," looked up at Bernstein's lightbulb, "willing, will have an effect on you those like you. Always remember Hosea; we must always love our neighbor no matter who he is, no matter what color."

The other two nodded solemnly agreement, and Hosea was completely overcome by the fine thoughts from the three white crackers.

Suddenly, the elevator gave a little lurch, bumped down a few more feet, and then stopped. Bernstein turned from his lightbulb and looked at Hosea; Bruce abandoned his book and faced from the little bronze plaque to look at Hosea; O'Brian was already looking at Hosea.

Hosea wasn't looking at anybody. He was madly throwing the stop-go lever back and forth. After a minute or so of this, he stopped and said, "Gennulmen, we is stuck. We is stuck an' ain't noboddy gonna' get us out of a' here 'till e Monday mornin'." He saw Bernstein about to speak and shook his head, "Nah, suh, there ain't no emergency bell on this here elevator. It broke 'bout six weeks ago an' we just never got around to havin' it repaired."

They all stood there wondering what to do next when O'Brian spoke out in a stern, serious tone, "The escape hatch, or whatever you call it. All elevators have them."

Hosea shook his head. "Not this here elevator. This one, she's an' *old* elevator and when a person enters in through the doors he stay in 'till they's open again. This here's a good ole' elevator; not like them flimsy new-fangled tin box kind of thing. This here one's made a' solid oak and steel," he knocked on the wall to emphasize his point, "An' once you is in, you stay in 'till them front doors open." Hosea, his whole body filled with pride at his marvelous machine which he had

ently controlled, smiled up at the three gymmen and his voice rising proudly, "Gennulmen, we is in 'till Monday mornin'. Ain't nobody leavin' this elevator. This a damn good elevator."

There was another moment of silence, broken only by a sort of choking sound in Hosea and then, "Lawdy, Lawdy. Today mornin', tha's a long time, a awful long time." He sat down in the corner under his stop and go lever and sobbed softly. In a minute he was asleep.

Bruce let his hat drop to the floor and began unbuttoning his coat. "Well, as long as we have to stay here we might as well get comfortable. We'll be spending a couple of days and nights here without any food or water. The main thing we must do is not breathe hard or sweat. We must conserve the water in our systems."

The other two nodded in agreement and they all stripped down to their underwear. They thought of waking Hosea, but decided to let him sleep and let him take his clothes off when he woke up. Then they picked up his pile of clothes and put them to the three empty corners of the elevator and sat down.

They spent the next half-hour in embarrassed silence and meditation. Their faces were a cadaverous white. Bruce was the only one wearing jocky shorts. The other two preferred boxers. Bruce looked furtively at O'Brian's legs. They were pinker than his and almost hairless. He followed them up until he saw the tip of O'Brian's left testicle peeping out at him. He had always wondered about that, and now satisfied and smiling, he let his head fall back against the wall and closed his

Bernstein was the first to break the silence. "Gentlemen," he said. The other two snapped back to consciousness and looked at him. "I was just thinking what a marvelous opportunity this could be for us

to do some really original thinking on the whole ecumenical movement. This is a golden opportunity for a real dialogue between the proponents of our country's three major faiths. Here we are, fated (Dr. Bruce nodded gravely) to be within the confines of this elevator for two solid days. It has been proven that man makes his greatest strides during periods of adversity. As a matter of fact I gave a sermon on that very topic last week. And gentlemen, here we are, in a situation that I think we can all agree to, that is extremely adverse. I think it only proper, and in fact a holy duty (once again Dr. Bruce nodded gravely) that we . . . um, let's see . . . oh yes . . . that we transcend (both Bruce and O'Brian's faces lit up and glowed with agreement and admiration) yes, transcend this terrifying situation and change it into something that will be a positive good, a great and enduring testimony (they were all breathing hard now) to man's ability to overcome adversity and bring something great and wonderful out of it. And I know of no other way than to just sit here and in a meaningful dialogue come to grips with the real differences, if there really are any (all three men chuckled knowingly) among our respective faiths. . . ." Bernstein paused a second and then plodded on, "And if there are, we shall decide how to reconcile them, for our collective history covers over three thousand years and by putting the collective wisdom of those years to work, we cannot fail." Again there was a dramatic pause. Then Bernstein took a deep breath and in heavy tones asked, "Are you with me, my friends? Shall we embark on this great adventure?"

Father O'Brian was the first to speak. "Alex, it's a marvelous idea. Think of it. How lucky we are; completely cut off from the outside world. It will be a true meeting of the minds. Already I can see this as a real turning point in religious

history." And he too, paused a second, "Gentlemen, let's not kid ourselves; from this meeting can come a new understanding, a new way, a new life. After all, Paul was only *one* man," Rabbi Bernstein gave out a little choking sound while Father O'Brian continued, "And look at the results of his work."

Bruce added, "Yes, or Calvin. . ."

"Or Moses," said Bernstein.

"Yes we shall!" They all shouted.

There was another pause and then Father O'Brian said, "Well now." The other two looked at him, eyes wide and smiling urging him to go on. "Well now," he said again. "Well now, uh . . . yes . . . Before we start, I think we should all agree to call each other by our first names at all times. I think that just this little thing in itself will enable us to cut through the stiff structure of relationships that society has forced in-between the believers of our faiths. We must be as free and honest with each other as possible." The other two nodded their head in agreement with him.

Again there was a long silence. Robert Bruce was the first to speak. "I think it would perhaps be best if we started out by listing all the things we agree on and get them out of the way so that we can spend the remainder of our time discussing the few things in which there is a major differing of opinion." All agreed with his proposal.

"Well then," he smiled, "I suppose the first thing we can get rid of is God . . . figuratively speaking, of course. I believe I am correct in saying that we all believe in Him." Again came smiles and nods of assent.

"Just a minute, Bob," said Father O'Brian. "I think it would behoove us to keep a running account of this meeting. I have a pen and a large address book in my coat pocket. Let me get them out."

He started burrowing to the bottom of his clothes to get to the coat.

"Good idea, Pat. Tell us when you're ready."

"All set," came the reply.

"Fine, now we all agree on God; that's settled." Patrick busily wrote down under "Agreed". "Now next comes Christ." Bernstein's smile faded just a trifle. "We saw this and changed it to Jesus. "We agree in Jesus's life as an historic event." O'Brian nodded and so did Bernstein, but then he said, "Yes we do, but though there are some who think the whole thing is pure fabrication. After all, it is based on hearsay and that sort of thing doesn't even hold up in our courts of law."

"Ummm, yes," said Bob. "Patrick, we agree that Jesus lived." Patrick wrote that down and also that both he and Bob agreed on the conception of Christ.

"How do we stand on free will?" asked Patrick.

Alexander spoke up. "I think we all agree with the concept of Free Will."

"To a certain extent," added Bob.

"No, I'd say pretty much all the way, at least after Baptism," said Patrick.

"But you can't forget Predestination, Pat," reminded Bob.

Pat wrote down, "Agreed on Free Will except Bob who has certain reservations because of his ideas on Predestination."

Alexander said, "Gentlemen, we seem to have reached a certain impasse in our discussion. We agree in general, but we disagree in the specifics; perhaps we should go ahead and get these more narrow and unimportant specifics out of the way and then we can get on to the great things before us; namely making a meaningful synthesis of the differing views of God over the last three thousand years for mankind."

"Yes, let's," they all said, and Patrick checked the cartridge in his fountain pen.

Bruce said, "I think the best way for us to this is for each one of us to say what doesn't agree with in the other's religion, in a purely unprejudiced, intellectual way, of course."

"Of course," his two friends agreed willingly.

"Who shall be first?" he asked. When one volunteered, he suggested that they flip a coin and the odd man would start. After rummaging around in their pockets, Bob and Pat came up with nickles while Alex brought forth a quarter, Bob looked knowingly at Patrick, who giggled accordingly. They flipped and it turned out that Bob was the odd man.

"O.K.," said Bob. "First I'll tell Alex where I disagree with him and then I'll tell Pat where I disagree with him."

"Number one; I don't know why you don't accept Jesus as Christ. After all, he is one of you. Number two; all that other stuff. I really cannot see that either. If Moses started it for reasons of revelation, don't you think our Pure Foods and Drugs Act has about done away with the need for it? Number three; and thank goodness you realize the spirit I say all this in, Alex, but the way you all like to live together and your sometimes over-zealous ways of running your businesses. . . I guess those are the main things that I cannot see." Pat was busily taking down notes. "Well, Alex, I guess it's Pat's turn."

Alex breathed a sigh of relief and then looked deeply in delicious anticipation.

Bruce started again, "Number one; I don't see how you can keep saying that substantialism is a reality and not a figment of your imagination, Pat. Any test of it just doesn't happen. Number two; the whole heirarchical set-up and the fantastically totalitarian way the Church is run with the ensuing control over men's lives is just plain scary. Number three; the control. Don't you think advocating

the rhythm method and not anything else is a bit hypocritical? Number four; the way you cut your children off from the mainstream of American life by sending them to parochial school."

Pat was writing much more slowly this time. As a matter of fact, he was still on number one when he had pressed so hard against the paper that the point of his pen spread apart leaving a large blob of ink over the word "imagination." Bob turned to him and said, "Well, I guess that's about it, Pat." Pat looked at him with something resembling a smile on his face. Bob broke the silence by saying, "Well, it looks as if I'm the only one who hasn't been put to the screws, so-to-speak."

Pat and Alex leered at him evilly, but since Bob was rather devoid of a sense of humor, their expressions merely looked like off-center smiles. "Who wants to, ha-ha, have at me?" The animal roar rising from the throats of both Pat and Alex almost woke Hosea up. He turned over grinning in his sleep and buried his face in the corner humming "We Shall Overcome" softly to himself.

"And I always thought he was a good one," they all thought.

"Pat spoke up, 'Well, Bob, Alex and I know that you, too, want to find out what we don't understand about your particular persuasion. Number one; Predestination. I mean, really, Bob, no matter how you try to explain it, the doctrine completely shoots Free Will to Hell.'"

"How about Purgatory or Limbo," chided Bob.

Pat ignored him and kept on. "Number two; your ethic of living simply and honorably while at the same time managing fantastic fortunes and letting your children go wild is, to use your own words, 'hypocritical' perhaps? Number three; there is only one Church and thus you are, at worst, a traitor, and a heretic and at best, fantastically ignorant."

The silence was so thick that it almost muffled Hosea's humming. Alex spoke up. "Gentlemen, gentlemen, look at us. We have fallen prey to that same devil that has beleaguered mankind for the last three thousand years. Emotion gentlemen, blind emotion. We said that we should have our discussion in an unprejudiced and completely intellectual atmosphere. Here we are completely cut off from our society. The only things we must control are ourselves. Surely we are capable of that; we who have chosen as our life work that self-same objective for our flocks."

Pat nodded. "Yes, we lost control. We cannot let it happen again."

"Yes, said Alex. However, I do think it would be best if we tried to sleep a few hours before we start over again." The other two agreed with him so they lay back and closed their eyes. Bob said it would be nice if the light were out. The other two agreed so he got up and unscrewed the bulb until it blinked out.

In the quiet Alex noticed the elevator was rocking gently from side to side. Rub-a-dub-dub; three men in a tub . . . plus one, thought Alex. Within minutes they were all sound asleep.

They didn't sleep long, however. Hosea woke them up. "O' Lawd, Lawd! Let me outa' here! Let me outa' 'dis here whale! I ain't done nothin' wrong! Please, Lawd; Sweet Jesus! Make him vomit me out onto 'de land." Then he started rolling madly around the floor pounding the three clergymen with his hands and feet and body.

"Hosea, stop that!" shouted Bob. But Hosea wasn't listening.

"Sweet Jesus! Lawd God of the Universe! Praise 'de Lawd. . . . Sing out sweet angels! O' Lawd, let me out O' dis whale! . . . I's so scared, Lawd."

Bob stumbled to his feet to try and screw in the lightbulb. He was knocked down twice by Hosea's wildly gyrating body before the light was restored. Im-

mediately Alex and Pat jumped on top of Hosea to quiet him down. "Let Hosea!" shouted Bob, "You're still in the elevator," and he waved his hand around the little room.

Hosea's body gave a quiver then he lay quietly. "I'se sorry, gennulmen. I must have been havin' a pow'rful bad dream. He said I didn't give you too much of a frig."

Bob laughed and said that he really didn't, while the other two smiled in silent approval. They asked him if he wouldn't like to strip down to his underwear, too, but he said, "No thank you. 'Secin's how," he didn't have any on.

They all lay back again in their respective corners, but this time they left the light on. Alex was the first to awake; the others were still sleeping silently. After looking at his watch he decided that it must be morning, although it could just as easily be eight in the evening as far as he knew. However, going on the assumption that it was morning, he groped in his overcoat pocket for the little prayerbook he had taken out of his office after services early Friday evening. He found it and opened it to the appropriate page and then began to chant the Hebrew in a low voice. He had been chanting the prayer for less than a minute when Pat's weary voice cried out, "Hey Alex, for the love of Pete, or whatever, will you please hold it down."

"I'm saying my morning prayers, Pat."

"How do you know it's morning. Go back to sleep."

"I'll try to be quieter." He continued to the end in almost a whisper.

Bob was soon awake. He stood up and stretched. "Boy, am I stiff. That has to be the most uncomfortable night I've ever spent."

Hosea's foot nudged the top of Pat's head. He woke again with a jump. After seeing what it was that had awakened him he gave a sigh and said, "That scared me almost to death. I was dreaming my his-

between the two elevator doors and they were closing and I couldn't move. They touched my head just as Hosea did. By now, Pat had decided, it was morning and fished out his Rosary from among his clothes and started praying.

Taking a few laps around the beads, eh?" chuckled Alex. Pat just smiled, brushed his teeth and sped up his Latin in three hundred to about six hundred words a minute.

"I can't understand you fellows," said Pat. "You keep saying the same set of prayers year after year, day in and day out so fast you can't tell one word from another. I really don't see how they can mean anything after all that."

They lapsed into a disgruntled silence. Hosea spoke up: "Gennulmen, gennulmen, we is argerin' an' fightin' over stuff that it gonna get us out a' this here little world. I don't know about you, but I's hungry an' hongry as I can be, an' I's a piss somethin' turrble."

Reminded of their more immediate plight, the three clergymen started talking to each other again, but in a much more casual manner. "Dr. Bruce, Dr. O'Brian," Bernstein said. "We must find a way to get rid of our liquid wastes. I believe the doctor can take care of itself for the remainder of the time we will be in here."

They all sat there and looked around the room and then at each other. "Don't do nothin' that'll hol' no liquid wastes, gennulmen." The three clergymen couldn't find anything either.

"Then we shall just have to control ourselves," said Dr. Bruce.

"Oh, Lawdy," moaned Hosea.

O'Brian shifted uneasily. "Well let's do something to take our minds off our predicament."

"Shall we continue on with our mission of finding the key to the misunderstanding that lies among our religions?" asked Bernstein.

"Hells bells, Bernstein," said Bruce. "We can hardly talk to each other much less solve the problem of the ages."

"I have an idea," said O'Brian. "Many of the greatest thinkers in the history of man say that the closer one is to nature, the more one is one with this world, the better chance one has at finding ultimate truth, at least as it pertains to this world." He turned and looked at Hosea and then at his two companions.

"Why not," said Bruce.

Hosea just sat in his corner, his legs outstretched and crossed, gritting his teeth, and letting out low little grunts. "I ain't sure what you gennulmen mean by me bein' close to nature, but I's got an' inklin'. It's awful close, gennulmen. It's so awful close I can hear its call." The three men's faces lit up for the first time in hours at this revelation. "As a matter of fact I c'n even feel it." It was easy to see that Hosea and nature were very close.

"What does it say to you, Hosea? What does nature tell you of man and love and the law," asked Bernstein.

"N-n-n-nuthin', Suh... Unnh... All it says is piss befo' you bust, you stupid nigger!" Hosea spun around quickly and with head bowed and eyes streaming tears, he piddled in his corner.

Father O'Brian went over to console him. "Don't worry about it, Hosea. It just couldn't be helped. I have an idea. If we rip up the carpet and pile it in your corner, we can all pass water into that and although the odor will be somewhat disagreeable, I think we can make do until we are rescued. I have a knife in the left pocket of my pants." He turned to the others and they nodded their assent. Father O'Brian started cutting around the edge while the rest moved into the center. The rug was hard to cut with his little penknife, but Hosea volunteered to take over after the priest had finished a half of it. When Hosea had completed balling

it up in his corner he went back to Father O'Brian's corner.

Dr. Bruce got up. "Well, now that we have a water closet, we might as well use it." And he did, and Rabbi Bernstein did, and Father O'Brian did.

There was a long silence as the four men sat down at the far side of the elevator. "Well at least we probably won't have to do it again," joked Father O'Brian.

"Ha-ha," said Dr. Bruce who was very thirsty.

Father O'Brian brought out his Rosary and started to pray once more.

"Here we go again," said Dr. Bruce who started humming "Nearer My God to Thee."

Bernstein, obviously irritated, snapped out, "That is going to do a lot of good," and started singing the Hatikvo changing from Hebrew to English to Hebrew and so on.

Dr. Bruce switched to "Onward Christian Soldiers."

Father O'Brian put away his Rosary and started singing "Ave Maria" in Gaelic.

Bruce sang faster and louder.

So did Bernstein.

So did O'Brian.

Hosea didn't know quite what to do amongst all this noise and fuss, so he settled on "Nobody Knows 'de Trouble I've Seen" as somehow appropriate to the situation.

Now Dr. Bruce was starting each verse of "Onward Christian Soldiers" with "God Damn it."

Father O'Brian had switched from Gaelic to Latin interspersing "Ave Maria" with pungent Anglo-Saxon monosyllables.

Rabbi Bernstein had by now lapsed into some rather picturesque Yiddish epithets whose nature was made quite clear by their fantastic onomatopoeiac characteristics.

Then Dr. Bruce started putting "God

damn it" at the end of each verse and before and after each line, then each word. Finally he left out the song altogether and changed "it" to "you all" and then "y'all."

O'Brian was now completely unintelligible. He just sat on his haunches screaming and kicking his feet on the floor and hitting his head against the wall.

Bernstein's eyes were closed and he was jumping up and down on the sodden linoleum of carpet, also screaming.

Hosea just closed his eyes and put his hands over his ears, all the while moaning "Gennulmen, gennulmen, please," but his words were completely absorbed by the surrounding pandemonium.

About this time it occurred to O'Brian that it would be much better for him if he hit someone else's head instead of his own, so he leaned over and gave Bruce a Karate chop behind the left ear (he was an ex-marine). Yelling out, "Heretic!" he delivered the blow and Bruce was quiet. Then he stumbled over to the rug where Bernstein was, eyes still closed, jumping up and down, and started to do the same thing to him, but Bernstein happened to open his eyes just as the blow was falling, giving him time to retaliate in like manner (he was an ex-marine, too) and they both fell to the floor.

The elevator was quiet except for Hosea's low, "Gennulmen, gennulmen, please..." Then he noticed he was the only one saying anything and opened his eyes. He looked over the now peaceful battlefield with its fallen warriors. "Lawdy, Lawdy. Thank you, Lawd."

He smiled.

It was Monday morning. A large crowd had gathered about the door to the strict elevator. Most of them were regular occupants of the building, but here and there were groups who had arrived for the C

tion as well as reporters and news-
ers; the local television station was
broadcasting the dramatic rescue.

A hush fell over the crowd as the floor
cator fell from five and-a-half down
ne. Some workmen opened the door
n the outside and the crowd im-
mediately crushed around the entrance to
the occupants.

one corner was a shapeless heap of

soggy carpet giving off a very disagreeable
odor; on top of the rug was a large, shape-
less yellowish-red glob, on top of that a
large pile of bones at the very top was
a tiny penknife, while on the far side
sat a wizened little Negro man with a
huge, distended stomach.

The crowd sucked in a collective breath.

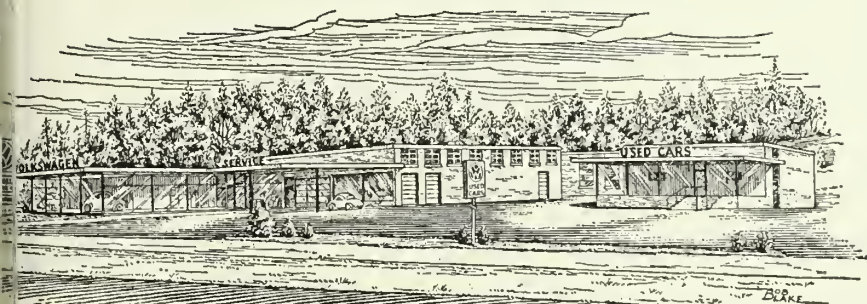
"I love all my neighbors, especially my
white neighbors," smiled the little man.

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The Inkling: A Book Review

An author's second published work in prose or poetry is by its very nature of critical importance to his later reputation. While his first volume introduces him to the reading public and places his name on the critics' lists, it is his second and subsequent volumes which determine a permanent niche for him in the arts. Reviewers require two source points on which to draw before any precise prediction of an artist's future can be made. Second works must contain the "commendable qualities" noted in the first volumes. Perhaps this stands true even more so for prose than poetry. The "note of promise" appended to every first novel (critics clearly stab wildly in determining these latent gems of style) must be developed. Progress for the novelist becomes the measure of his success.

The Inkling by North Carolina artist Fred Chappell is a remarkable example of second novel success. Although his artistic future cannot be forecast with orphic fidelity, outright comparison of Chappell's two volumes of prose aid in judging his advancement. *It Is Time, Lord*, his first novel, suffers at points from his use of the stream-of-consciousness prose form. Although his grasp and application of Southern material are tremendous, thoughts flow through sections of the book like an unchecked torrent. Rich in sensual insight, the story lacks an ordering principle. The stream-of-consciousness form has been used regularly by great writers for the past fifty years. Any modern novel written in that form is immediately on the defensive with

regard to the bevy of successful novels written earlier. *It Is Time, Lord* is a conservative novel in its approach, holding securely to established literary methods.

The Inkling is a remarkably mature work which breaks from the established bonds in search of new and untapped modes of prose expression. The story centers around a boy and his slightly older sister who move through childhood in a chain of grotesque events. The characters are warped by the end of the novel into a sadder and more distorted state than the weak and greedy adults who make up their family.

Unlike in *It Is Time, Lord* a clear independent relationship of characters is developed in *The Inkling*. The responsibility which the young boy feels toward his sister is intensified as they grow older. His father's death forces him as well into a role as man of the house. The boy attempts in vain to protect his fading mother from the bitter attack of his Uncle Hake, a perennial leech on the household. Jan first attempts to shield his sister, Timmie, from the many dark secrets which she finds in the world. As the condition shifts steadily towards madness, however, his problem becomes to protect her from the fantastic visions of her mind.

In the character of Timmie, Fred Chappell has delicately portrayed the growth of a child schizophrenic. Her early fears of the world are dissolved as she turns inward to herself to create a more compatible and bizarre universe. No longer will

endent upon her brother's comfort, she
s to entice him like a siren into the
reaches of her madness:

all her foreseeing had drawn closer,
everything which was about to happen
as crowding to the needle's eye of
er permitting. . . . After this oncom-
g moment she did not care, for it
arked the completion of the whole
story of Jan's love for her; it was to
killed by the instrument which had
en constructed to guard it. She felt
pity for Jan because there was no
ult in him.

Jan changes from his original strength
purpose under the bending load of his
t's illness. Puberty also undermines
once complete control of his body and
l. When the lecherous Uncle Hake
ly marries an enticing wild girl from
e hills, Jan's duty is split between
ierly concern for his sister and a new
se to seduce his willing aunt. The
se violence which climaxes the novel
os how a malevolent environment can
soy the strong child as well as the weak

I his prose work Fred Chappell pro-
gs a vivid sense of reality through
al imagery and succinct character
ayal. For example, the picture given
liz Harbison, Jan's school mistress,
gh short on words is impressive in
sight:

Se took her stand behind her small
o. scarred desk, a big square woman,
gy all over, as if she had been con-
structed of soggy newsprint and left to
harden. Her voice was opaque with
uthority, but brittle too, and with
ret veins of decay in it.

ints in the first of the novel, however,
echnique fails and impressions which
r intended to be sensitively child-like
n rather childish.

The lamentable dissolution of Timmie's
mind is gauged by the widening degree of
dream-filled observations which she
creates. Her gloss of reality extends to the
point where she would stab her brother's
hands so as to liberate "the whispering red
roses in his palms." Totally in contrast to
Timmie's universe is Jan's. His early im-
pressions are marked by a cold austerity
where even people seem as predictable as
inanimate objects. The deepening madness
of Timmie and his inescapable sexual
desire for his aunt make Jan, however, by
the novel's end merely a pawn shifting in
response to the initiative of others.

The Inkling is rooted in the tragic ele-
ment. This is demonstrated by the ef-
fective contrast of the children's worlds as
they decay. A universal fatality is visible
as well in the plot sequence. The reader
discovers by the novel's conclusion that the
perverse individuals who have so effec-
tively shattered Timmie and Jan do not die
or move on. The disease persists from
generation to generation. The remarkable
cyclical pattern of the plot provides ground
in which the inkling of the novel's con-
cluding tragedy is revealed.

A word of conclusion is in order for
those who would read *The Inkling*. At
first glance the opening chapters appear in
some respects pointless with no visible
thread of plot or intent. Characters are
forced upon the reader, and little sympathy
is asked for in first viewing their dilemma.
The novel appears to start in the center of
a story. The smoothness of the opening
has been sacrificed in order to uphold the
dramatic conclusion and the unique plot
structure. It is only in the final pages that
the thematic climax, foreshadowed since
the first page, is reached. I am not fully
satisfied, however, that the opening need
be so fragmentary in order to support the
novel. Even so, it is this attempt at a new
plot form which gives Fred Chappell's
recent fiction its ring of success.

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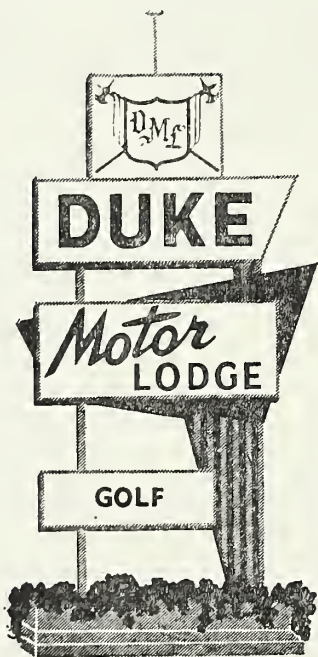
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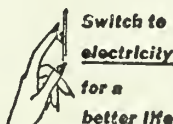
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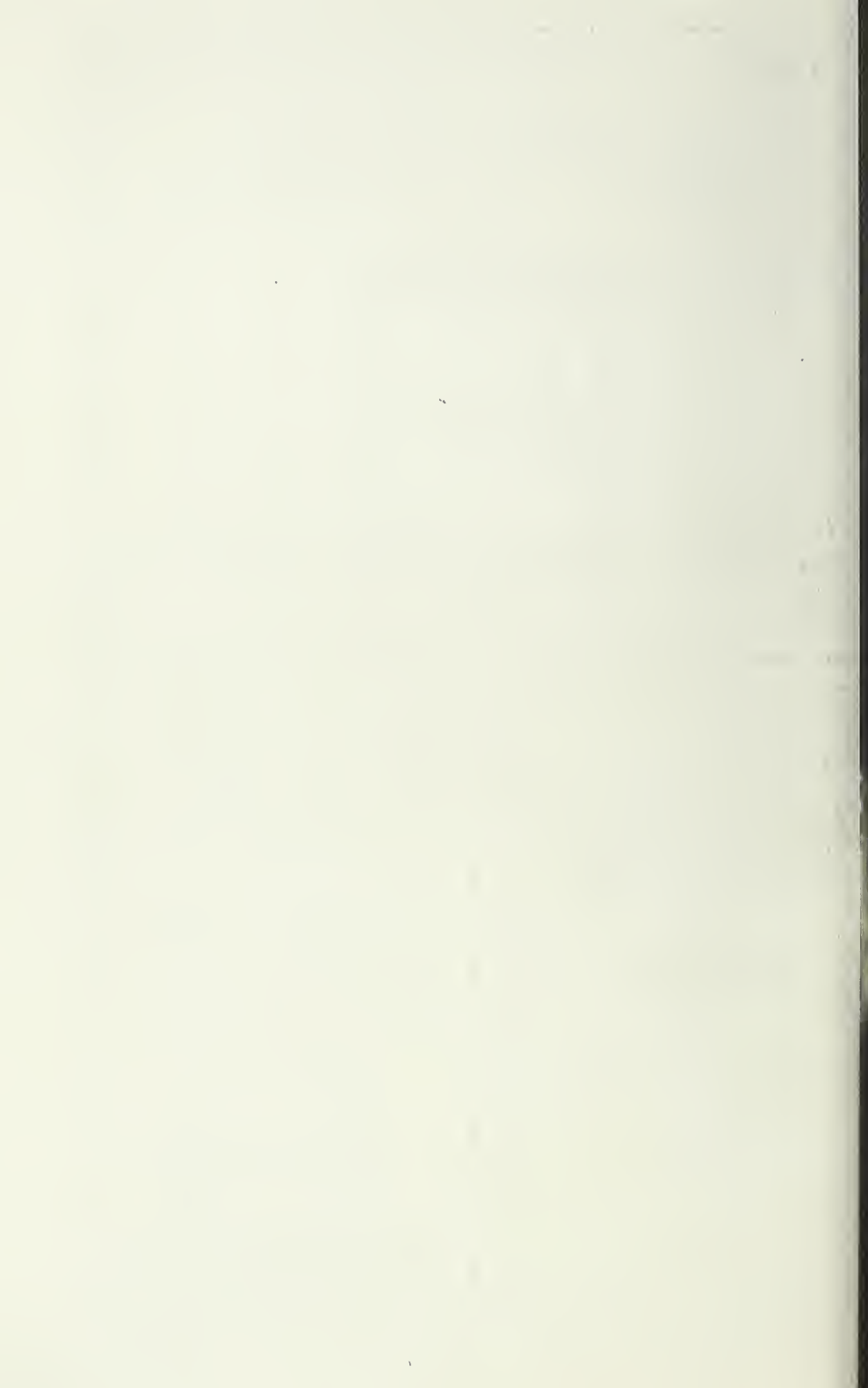
Study time is eyestrain time!
Use at least a 150-watt lamp
bulb of the diffused type.
Eliminate glare by making
sure no unshielded lights
are in sight.

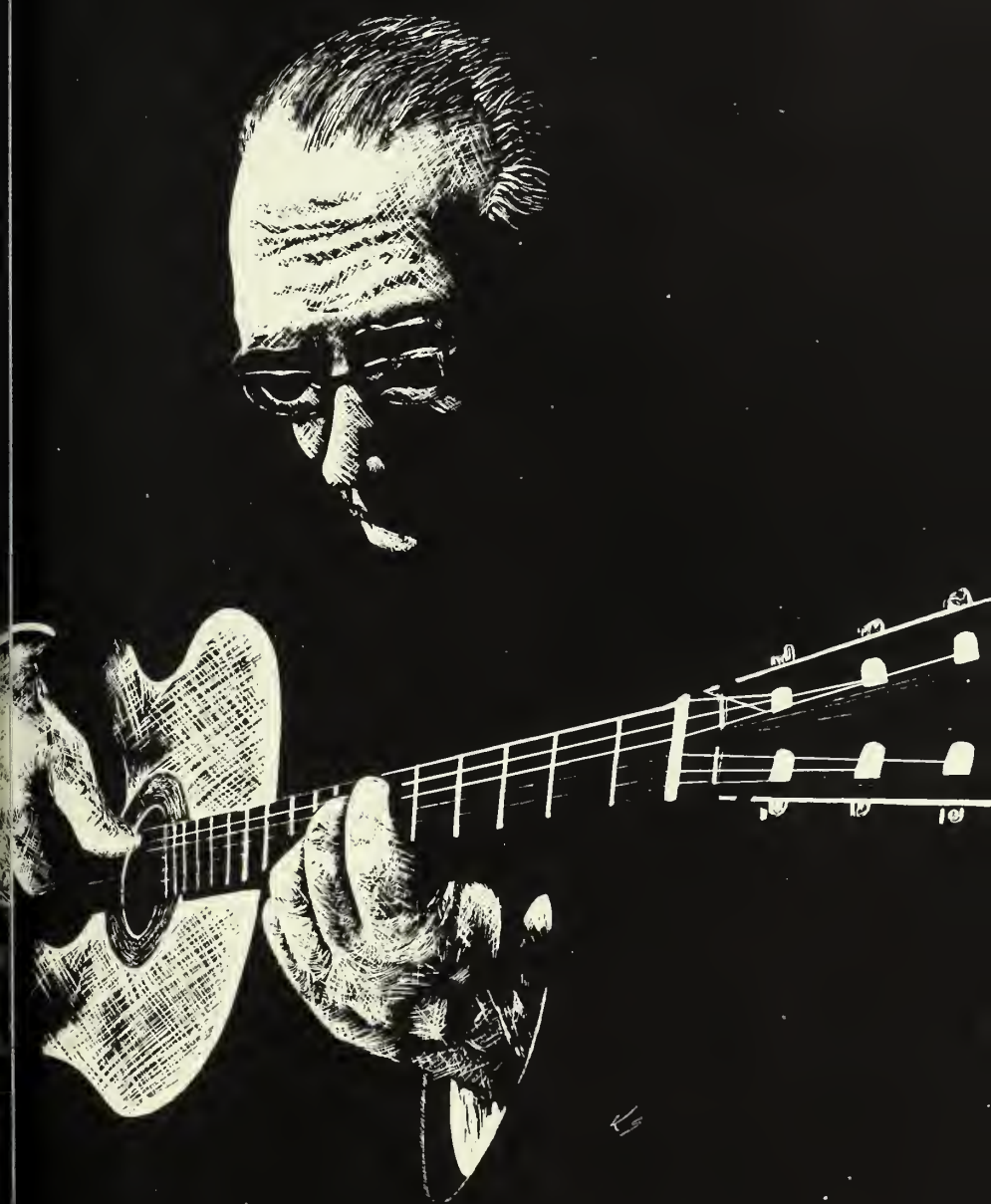


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THE ARCHIVE

The Archive

Duke University

VOLUME 78 NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 1966

- Editor:* Jini shrinks
slightly
at the thought
of Alex
who has gone
to Denver
and come back again
but not a hero.
- Fiction
Staff* While Fred rides
empty boxcars in search
of red-head Rôgé speaking
Anglo-Saxon,
- Poetry
Staff* Nancy weaves her verses
on a two-way
loom, John is
wondering where we
all are not,
- Art
Staff* And Jane is buying
oil paints to go to
Boston. And Vicky keeps
her people in a brown
manila envelope.
- Exchange
Editor* While Ningus sends out
mags and applications
trying to exchange . . .
herself,
- Business
Staff* Harlan, Paul,
Worth and Stevensteve
stand solid as we're
shrinking, riding, weaving,
going, standing
balanced on our thin
circus typeofrope.

Americans seem to feel a high need to name the phenomena in their country. This is particularly true of the generations which seem to feel that by putting a name to either they can in some way control or classify actions. This high need to name has become quite a problem recently for the "Older" generation, as it seems that they can find no epithet for the phenomena of the sixties, the "Younger" generation. Still around are those who would classify any boy with a beard or girl with long hair a beatnik; and there are those, more familiar with the general purpose of the beat who are trying to use new terms, such as purist or activist to name these new people with a cause.

It seems however, at least at Duke, that none of these new names come any closer to describing what is actually happening than the epithet "Silent" applied to the students of the fifties. In fact, about the only adjective that could be applied to all recent Duke happenings is "intense." Perhaps all of us have noticed the increased interest in politics and cultural events, but fewer are familiar with the quality and intensity of student writing being produced.

Having watched three classes of Freshman writers at Duke, in my opinion the current class seems both more proficient and more aware than the others. There are now rumors among upper classmen that the idea that Duke inhibits the creative student is a myth promulgated by the student who inhibited his creativity sometime during Freshman Week. On the Archive staff alone there are three novels being written and as many in the planning.

But along with this increased intensity comes an increase in dedication and experimentation. Each of Duke's young writers seems to have his own artistic theory and style. Here it is necessary to state exactly what the Archive's policies are in this field. The Archive feels that it is unfair to choose one style and favor it above the others. For this reason its policy is to print that which succeeds in its own purpose. In this way we are not only providing for the many different literary biases of the various members of the campus, but also providing a testing ground to as many of the campus writers as possible.

It has been said that the word intensity implies a dissatisfaction. This may be so, but it is a dissatisfaction that is being acted upon. The Duke student writer is not beating

Announcements

The Archive Freshman Writing Contest was won by three Freshman poets, Mike Mes, Art McTighe and David Moffett. Their poems have been included in this issue.

During the coming semester a discussion of student writing will be held in the Archive office each Friday afternoon at three o'clock. All those interested are urged to attend.

Deadline for the Archive Festival Issue is March 10th. Entries should be submitted to the Archive Office, 301 Flowers, or mailed to Box 4665, Duke Station.

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Wild Bill's Last Race

Bill Davis felt very solitary. Although his wife was sitting beside him and their next-door neighbors, the Goldmans, were only two seats down, and there were three children and a friendly black dog waiting for him at home, he was strangely apart from all of them. And although he had a good job selling life insurance and was well thought of and respected and well-liked, both in the neighborhood and at the office, he was still alone; as much alone, he thought, as he had ever been in his life. And although he was a busy man with many interests and many responsibilities, there were only two things on Bill Davis' mind on this soft summer night. The first was that he was forty years old, and the second was that this was one hell of a place for Bill Davis to be on his fortieth birthday.

The trotters. He snorted disdainfully, and then, fearing that perhaps he had snorted a little too loud, he glanced at his wife. He wouldn't want her to think that he wasn't enjoying himself; after all, this was her brainstorm, her baby. But there was no danger of his wife noticing his snort. She was actively jabbering away with Helen Goldman, talking about dresses or something, he thought. He looked over at Milt Goldman. Milt had a pencil in his mouth that he was chewing thoughtfully. His face, sunk deep into the

program that rested on, actually with his bulging lap, was a picture of anguished concentration. Davis snorted again. It was no use. He couldn't get interested.

Hell, he hadn't been to the races in years, hadn't even played them in the newspapers. And then all of a sudden she springs this big birthday surprise on him—going to the races with the Goldmans, Milt and Helen, for your birthday. A night out for a change, because he knew he had liked the races when he was younger and he hadn't been since they had been married. And when she had said 'races,' Bill Davis' mind drifted back to suddenly he could smell the heat and sawdust and the stables, warm and full and pungent with the odor of hay and horses; and he could envision the track and the bright sun on a hot day, the crowd sweating in shirtsleeves crowded together at the finish line so that you couldn't move a step, all you could do was cheering and pushing and stretching their horses home, and the flying up off the turf behind the fouling of the jocks' paws on the pounding flesh, and the jocks close up on their horses' backs, their bright silks shining in the sunlight, urging, pleading, fighting for position and then laying down the whip and barrelling down the backstretch in a wild, thundering spectacular of speed and power and color; and then

race, between races, the cool dimness of the bar and a cold gin and tonic to ease away the sweat and the tension and bring back your voice. That was what Bill Davis had thought of when his wife had mentioned the races, because that was what the races meant to Bill Davis. But then she had said 'night', and he had known what she meant. The trotters. He snorted again. A nice, sociable evening at the races.

He thought of wearing a suit and being elegant and restrained, clean and quiet and respectable, at the races was wrong to Bill Davis, but somehow it seemed normal tonight. It was the only way that he could conceive of acting at the harness races. At the harness races, too, were wrong to Bill Davis. Back in the old days, they had called him Wild Bill. Wild Bill Davis had been anything but polite and restrained at the races, but Wild Bill Davis had taken one nice pile of money from the purses in his day, which was something that not very many people could claim. He had Dick and Norty and Max, the four of them bachelors, had roamed the eastern seaboard and parts of the midwest, from New York in the late winter up through the Philadelphia Downs for the Derby in May, along the rich three-year-old circuit from Saratoga and Belmont for the stakes, all summer long there had been the likes of Pecos and Bowie and Laurel in Maryland and Monmouth Park, Garden State, Atlantic City, and the Rock, Atlantic City, and the Fair Park. And they were good, too. Good as any man that ever laid a tenner on a pony. But those days were gone, those days were gone, and the Lord only knew what had become of the boys he had run with, the horses they had run after and the trainers they had met along the way—the jockeys and trainers and jocks, and the gamblers, the movie stars, the night-club entertainers, and the bums, the touts, the pool hustlers, all the people who

travelled through the country behind the horses, some of them following the horses and some of them following the ones who followed the horses, making an endless chain of sportsmen and gamblers, big-time and small-time, a migrant herd that made its home in the great concentration of hotels and bars and pool rooms that surrounded the race tracks, moving as the tracks opened and closed. It had been thirteen years now since Wild Bill Davis had been a member of that herd, and Wild Bill Davis was Bill Davis now, and he hadn't laid a bet in ten years, hadn't thought of a horse. Oh, he had made a few side bets here and there, on the big races, and he could recognize the big names—Swaps, Nashua, Dark Star, Garbage Train, Native Dancer, Bally Ache, Carry Back, Kelso, and the others, the ones who were always in the headlines—but he couldn't tell you who their jocks and trainers were, or who they were sired from or how much weight they should carry at top form, or what their measurements and strengths and weaknesses were, or how they ran their last ten races, and how their last ten races should have been run, as he could have told you once about every horse at the track. He was a married man now with three children and a dog and a good job. He should have been home now, he thought, with his feet propped up on a hassock, sipping coffee and watching television or maybe going over some of the contracts and forms that were due in the office tomorrow. Bill Davis snorted again and looked around and wondered just what the hell he was doing out here at the trotters with his wife and Milt Goldman, of all people, on his fortieth birthday.

He looked at his wife and Helen Goldman, absorbed in conversation, and he looked at fat Milt Goldman, who was still deeply involved with the program and the half-dozen tip sheets that he had insisted on buying. His glance wandered. No, he

just couldn't get interested. He looked out across the infield and the track. The half-mile track seemed absurdly small. You wouldn't even need glasses to watch the horses on the backstretch, and the far turn was almost in front of your face. And they went around it twice. Ridiculous!

And yet, there was a certain beauty about the track, a beauty in the way the infield grass sparkled and increased its greenness under the arc lights, the way the bright neon infield board shone into the darkness. Everything always looked prettier at night, he thought, under the arc lights. There was a certain quality in the lights that seemed to highlight the colors and bring everything into a sharper focus, and it was beautiful, almost thrilling, to look past the lights on the far side of the track and see only the darkness of the night. It was as if the race track were the star performer on a dark stage and there was one giant spotlight fixed upon it alone, as if it were the nucleus of light and action in a night of desolation. It was pretty, thought Bill Davis, but somehow it was wrong. It was pretty in a feminine way, like pastel colors in the bathroom or diamonds on a soft white hand. It lacked the hard, driving forcefulness, the power and the excitement and the spectacle of the thoroughbred races. And somehow, without knowing how or exactly when it had come, Bill Davis felt a longing inside of him for those hot afternoons when he was a reckless young man with money to burn and his head full of names and numbers and times and his spirit willing to gamble, to take a chance on losing a hundred or a thousand dollars on a sure thing, when there was no place to be confined to as home, and no one to worry about but number one, and number one was Wild Bill Davis. And now he was married, with children, and he looked at his wife and remembered that he was forty years old today. Not old, really, but still

too old to be out catting around with the boys. And they were probably all married and settled, too, so he was better off where he was. You have to grow up, you can't fight it. But, still, it was nice to remember. And he didn't feel like forty, not tonight at least. He felt very out of place having to be forty years old and married and watching the races all at the same time.

He took his eyes from the track and inspected some of the other people who were around him in the clubhouse. Back in the old days, he had barely even realized that the clubhouse existed, and if he had thought of it, he would have thought it was the place where the rich gentlemen and the families out for a year-end excursion to the races sat. It was with interest now that he looked at the people who surrounded him. Most of them were like himself, well dressed; the coat and tie congregation, he thought. There were many young men with their wives or girlfriends, a few older married couples, and a few families, all neatly dressed and so-called well-behaved. Many of them, he thought, had come down early and had supper at the track. He had noticed in the first race that all of the people had stood up when the horses crossed in front of them, and a few people had cheered, but no one had really gotten very much excited about the whole thing. It was a respectable, sociable group of people, out for a respectable, sociable evening at the harness races, as he looked around, he was surprised how remarkably well Bill Davis blended with the other clubhouse patrons, and he wondered if anyone else in the clubhouse felt the way Bill Davis felt tonight.

He was aroused from his thoughts by the blaring of the bugle echoing through the cool night air, calling the horses to the post for the second race. Milt Goldman stopped chewing on his pencil and looked up. His wife and Helen Goldman stopped talking. His wife jabbed him excitedly

"Oh, here they come, Bill," she said.
 "Who do you like in this one, Bill?"
 Milt asked.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Number two, Speedy Pick, that's who's going to win this race," said Milt knowingly. "Look here," he said, and he showed Milt the program and carefully explained his reasoning. Bill wondered if maybe he should tell Milt that what he was reading was a "best time" was actually the training time and that he was completely confused, but he decided against it. The Goldmans were good neighbors and he wouldn't want to hurt Milt's feelings. Milt gathered together the program and the tip sheets and got up to go to the window to place his two dollar bet.

"Aren't you going to bet, Bill?" his wife asked. "I'm betting number four to show." "You're not going to win any money if you don't bet," said Helen Goldman with the concern.

He shrugged his shoulders and turned away, casting his glance out on the track, watching the sulkies as they came from the paddock and paraded in front of the clubhouse. They walked slowly past, their hands held high, pulling the carriages behind them. Bill watched them casually as they trotted along the track, daintily picking up their feet in the precise manner of the trotting gait, which, he thought, looked even more ridiculous than the bounding gait of the first race. One of the horses broke stride and began bucking. The driver pulled on the harness and the horse returned to the correct gait. Bill chuckled softly to himself.

Milt returned from the window, disturbed by the people in their row as he struggled to squeeze his knees between their feet at the back of the seats in the row in front of them. When he finally got to his feet and sat down, his face was alive with excitement.

"You'll never guess what happened," he

said, gasping slightly for breath.

Bill and the two women looked at him.

"I went to the window to bet on Speedy Pick," Milt said quickly, "And this fella comes up to me and asks me who I like in the race. So of course I tell him Speedy Pick, and he says no, Speedy Pick don't have a chance. Well, I figured that he probably knows more about it than I do, so I asked him who he likes, and he says that he's got a hot tip, a sure thing, the horse can't lose. But at first he wouldn't tell me which horse it was. It turns out that this guy's a personal friend of the driver, used to be a driver himself, and he thought it might be unethical for him to give me information unless I bought him a ticket on the horse. So he wanted me to buy him a hundred dollar ticket, but I told him that I was only betting two dollars myself, and he finally settled for a five dollar ticket, and I put five on the horse myself! How about that? This must be my lucky night, yes, sir." He paused, and then continued in a whisper. "It's number one, My Rodney."

Bill turned his eyes heavenward and shook his head slightly from side to side. At least the harness races weren't entirely different, he thought.

"Oh, Milt," Helen Goldman was saying, "I don't know if you should have bet five dollars on just one race."

Milt began an avid defense of his wager.

The horses had come around the backstretch and lined up behind the starter's wagon. Now what fool ever thought of starting a horse race with a car, Bill thought. The car started around the track toward the starting line, and the announcer's short, high pitched voice called, "here they come." Bill frowned. They came to the start, in front of the clubhouse, and the car pulled away, starting the race. The spectators climbed to their feet in unison, and the announcer, in that same short, quick voice, said, "there they go,"

and again Bill felt that longing inside of him, a longing to hear the brisk ringing of the bell and the betting windows slamming shut and the chute clanging open and the announcer shouting, "they're off!" He looked at the race. The horses had begun trotting, and Bill, watching them, remarked to himself that they looked like ants or something in a bowl of water, desperately and yet slowly waving their legs, while the driver slowly and rhythmically raised and lowered the whip. It looked just as the big billboard that advertised it promised it would, that bad. Milt's horse, My Rodney, was on the outside and had taken the lead, but it was not a commanding lead, and only a few lengths separated the front horse from the last. They ran around the half mile in the same position, but as they approached the backstretch on the final lap, My Rodney began to lag. Speedy Pick came up on the inside to challenge and gradually took over the lead. My Rodney fell back and was third as the horses crossed the finish line with Speedy Pick an easy winner.

"Well, I'll be damned," said Milt, sitting down slowly. He looked as if he were exhausted. He turned to Bill.

"You think I got took?" he asked.

Suddenly the whole situation seemed absurd and incongruous to Bill Davis, and he laughed, hard and out loud, a bold, hearty laugh that visibly disturbed his wife and the Goldmans and seemed to disturb the other people around them.

"Now what's so funny?" his wife asked quickly and irritably.

Milt looked very hurt and he sat rather stolidly.

Bill tried to sober his expression. "Nothing," he said. "I just had a thought."

She turned away. "You better get some thoughts about some winners," she said. "And don't laugh at Milt. At least he's willing to spend a little money and have

a good time. I swear, I never saw anyone as stingy at the races as you are. And on your birthday, too. What you need is a good birthday spanking, I think."

What I need is a few good birthday belts, so I can make it through this beautiful evening, he thought, and then he thought how she had called him stingy. Wild Bill Davis, stingy. She was on teasing, of course, trying to make sure that he had a good time, but, still, it was funny her calling him stingy. If he was even stingy, it was only for her and the kids, and it wasn't stingy, more like thrifty, as he had to be that way. He didn't want to be. He certainly wasn't made that way. If any of the boys in the old days had heard anyone calling him stingy, they would have laughed so hard that they couldn't have gone to the track for a week. They'd have been doubled up that long. Stingy! He laughed softly to himself and remembered, as he had so often remembered, a day that now seemed a long time ago. August 17, 1951.

He was twenty-seven years old then, and he had already begun to calm down. He had followed the horses from track to track for five solid years, and in 1951 he was one of the few men who had won good money consistently from the track. He had gotten off the circuit that year, because he had just gotten bored and tired with the business and was a little worried about his future. He wondered now how that could ever have happened. He felt then that he had seen his last race. He settled down in an apartment and got a steady job. He remained in close touch with his contacts and followed the horses in the papers and the racing forms, but he did it mainly out of habit and it was already a mild thing. It was a much different life than his life on the circuit. They were running at Aqueduct then, in August of '51, and Norty and Dick were with them. Max, for some

reason or other, had failed to make the trip. Norty phoned him long distance in the middle of a Sunday night and told him to come up, just for the day, so on an impulse he took the next day off from work and grabbed the morning train to Long Island.

The summer day was hot and unbearably humid. On the train going up, with the windows open, he had tried to doze, but the sweat made his shirt stick to his back, and he could not sleep. He looked at the Morning Telegraph, scouted the horses that were running that afternoon, and finally ended up riding the train in only his undershirt and pants. He still remembered how people had looked at him then, but he was still young and wild in 1951 and didn't have the time to worry about what other people thought of him. He got into the City about eleven in the morning, and, still in his undershirt and excited about the prospect of seeing Norty and Dick again after almost six months, he went directly to their hotel, where he showered and dressed for the track. Norty and Dick told him that they had had a bad week, that prices were bad and the track was slow and the turf soggy. They had been betting only small amounts, trying to book the spots in a conservative manner, but he had never gone for. When they got to the track, they went to the bar and had lunch and a few drinks, and they spent the first part of the afternoon lounging in the air-conditioned comfort and reminiscing about the days, which then seemed so close, when they had travelled the circuit together. Norty and Dick laid out the first two races, but he had ten on Dilight Woman and Constellation, both longshots, for a \$448.80 Double, and Poor Tin Barry, a 35-1 shot for five to show, but the colt ran second in the first race. He knew then that he was in for a big day, a really big day. He bought a round of drinks for everyone in the crowded bar,

something that he had never done, and he began drinking himself, drinking more than he ever would have thought of doing six months before that. He had King Razz in the third, and the horse won a photo and paid \$18.00. He could still remember vividly how he felt then, his head reeling slightly from the whiskey, his nose pressed tightly against the window of the bar, with what seemed like thousands of people crowding in on all sides of him when the results of the photo flashed on the infield board.

He left the bar after the third race and went to mill with the crowd in front of the grandstand. He had been too high and too happy to feel the heat and the closeness of the people, but he felt that he would remember forever that fourth race. The race was a top-notch invitational for three and four year old fillies, and the horse was a four year old named Proud Fox. He had followed her the year before, when she had been entered mostly in the small claiming races, and although she had seldom won, she turned in good times and displayed good speed and endurance and a fighting spirit. Her sixth time out, she was claimed and the new owner wasted little time in entering her in the bigger races. With a new trainer and better riders, she had begun to pay off. On August 17, 1951, however, she was in fast company. She went in at 5-1, but by the time she came to the post, the betters had bucked her up to 15-1. Norty and Dick wouldn't touch her, but Wild Bill had her, three hundred dollar tickets, on the nose.

She was the number four horse, which put her right in the middle of the eight horse field for the mile and one-sixteenth handicap. She was medium weight at one-twenty-four, with Jersey Joe Culmone in the saddle. She broke clean and fast from the chute, but Jersey Joe held her back and turned her to the outside. She was third at the clubhouse turned and fell to fourth

at the head of the backstretch, but Culmone was still leaning back, holding her down. And Wild Bill Davis could still remember throwing back his head and shouting blindly at the horse and the jockey and yelling 'fix' at the top of his inebriated lungs as Proud Fox fell to fifth midway along the backstretch. And then she made her move. She picked up slowly at first, one horse at a time, and as they rounded the far turn and headed for home, she was five lengths off the pace, and, although the lead horse was beginning to tire, it didn't seem that Proud Fox could make it. But Jersey Joe gave her the bit and Proud Fox took off. With fifty yards to go, the jock hit her twice with the whip and Proud Fox responded; with a last burst of speed, she broke clear and won by half a length.

He came back to the bar after the fourth race, and he bought everyone drinks for the second and last time in his life, and the boys lifted him up on top of one of the tables and cheered him and proclaimed for all the world to hear that Wild Bill Davis was riding high once more. And he had taken his whiskey glass and raised it high over his head and shouted that he was the greatest to the people in the bar, and then, in a calm, subdued voice, like he remembered the comedian Joe E. Lewis doing, he said, "Post Time," and chugged his drink.

He stayed in the bar for the fifth and sixth races, and after that he had to leave to catch the train home. He was drunk for real by the time he had to leave, but he had John Luke in the fifth and El Rico, a rangy black gelding, in the sixth, both twelve-to-one shots, to make it six in a row; and on the way back, on the train, he picked out two horses that he would have bet in the final races, and later that night, when he listened to the late results on the radio, he heard that they had both come in. The next morning, when he counted his money, he found eleven thousand

dollars in his wallet. It was the big day that he had ever had at the races and was to be the last big day for Wild Bill Davis. He had quit his job that morning and lived off that money until it had almost run out, and while he was living high he met a girl and got married and got another steady job, with an insurance company, and he had kept that one. And now, thirteen years later, he sat silently in a world of his own making, relishing his thoughts and repeating them over to himself 'August 17, 1951,' the date of Wild Bill's last race.

He was still absorbed in his thoughts when he heard the bugle calling the horses to the post. He glanced up at the infield board and saw with amazement that it was the fourth race, and here he had been dreaming, sitting there as if he were in a trance, for almost half an hour, right through the third race. He was always afraid to look at his wife, but he had done so sheepishly.

"Well, welcome back to the world, dear," she said dryly, and Bill Davis knew that he had better have a good time for the rest of the evening, or there would be trouble at home for God knew how long.

"I've got one for this fourth race," he said smiling, trying to make his voice sound lively and interested. "I dreamed up a winner."

She looked at him suspiciously and a little disgustedly.

He looked at Milt, who was still deep in concentration. He had the tip spread out across his belly and the program on his knee, and he was busily figuring with the chewed stub of the pencil. So, from his experience in the second race, he decided to stick with his own picks for the rest of the races. Helen, Bill thought, must have gone to the ladies' room.

Bill slowly, almost secretly, opened his program and scanned the entries

the fourth race. His eyes stopped on the number four horse.

"Well, I'll be damned," he said.

"What, dear?" his wife asked.

"Oh, nothing," he said. "Just thinking loud."

She gave him a sidelong glance. The number four horse was named Norton. "Norty," his old buddy's name. Now that was a hell of a coincidence, he thought. Just as he was thinking about Norty and his old gang, he finds a horse with the same name. He knew that it was foolish to put money on a horse because of its name, but somehow whether he was wise or foolish or whether he won or lost was no longer of much consequence to him. He was forty years old now, and he had much more important things to worry about. And what was two bucks? It was the number four horse in the fourth race, just as Proud Fox had been the four horse in the fourth race on that August day fifteen years ago. And its name was Norty, his old crony's name. And he was forty years old today. That was a sure bet if he had ever seen one. But then Bill Davis never had been one for playing races.

"Yep," he said to his wife, "I've got a thing in this one. Number four."

He got up on his feet and walked up the clubhouse steps to the cashiers' windows. Climbing the stairs was a bit of a struggle, and he paused at the top to catch his breath. Back in the old days, he thought, he could stand in the sun all day and get drunk at night and never feel hungover the next morning. Well, he was getting on in years. He was forty now. Number four in the fourth race on his twentieth birthday. How could he lose?

And the horse was a longshot, too, 10-1 according to the infield board, and those were damn good odds for this crazy harness racing.

He reached into his trouser pocket and pulled out two loose one dollar bills. He looked at the long row of windows along the wall, the two dollar windows to his left and the hundred dollar ones way down on the right, and again he felt the old yearning inside of him, the longing for the old days when he would sidle up to that hundred dollar window with a crisp new bill and tell the man at the window, "number four on the nose," and then go to stand in the sun by the finish line and root for his horse home. He put the two dollars back in his pocket and took out his wallet. There were five ten dollar bills inside. He looked again at the rows of windows and at the people who crowded around them, hurrying to get their bets in before the start of the race. There were long lines around the two dollar windows, but the fifty dollar window was open. Bill looked again at his wallet and at the windows.

"What the hell," he said to himself, "For old time's sake. Wild Bill just might ride one more time."

He walked up to the fifty dollar window and laid the money on the counter.

"Number four," he said, "On the nose." And as he said it, a smile momentarily spread across his face, but it vanished very quickly, because Bill Davis was forty years old, and a married man.

He bought a coca-cola at the concession stand and went back and sat next to his wife and watched the race, calmly and quietly. His horse ran last.

N.C. 54 opened like a fan
before him; tires hardly fastened to the road,
his motor drowned the raging dogs that ran
beside. The bucking bike plunged more quickly
with its load; and then the dotted middle line
swung left—the whistling cycle went straight,
struck the leaning branches with a lowering whine,
left half an arm upon the tree that broke its gait.
And just before he landed: thought how the moon
and forest toppled by; remembered then how, young,
he rang the chapel bell, rode the rope
down and up again; remembered how he hung
midway above the floor. He had a sudden hope
the bell might sound—listened—but he hit too soon.

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Behold the human anatomy,
Prostrate blue-clay upon the marble.
(A reasonable sort of man, perhaps,
But given to misfortune;
Beneath the shrunken head one sees the skull.
The hangedman's mark is on the throat of him.)
These are the strings that were his voice.
Proceeding downward from the head,
With skin and muscle cut just so,
One finds the breathless lungs,
The heart, the seat of all emotions,
Where mingle with the blood the several vital humors.
All these things uncovered for the stares
Of students, and the curious
Who always come to such affairs.

But the bearded man, the master of the show,
Having probed already all unknowing
The fetid pulp where once the mind resided,
Delves deft-handed among the viscera,
Seeking that node he knows is there,
Somewhere, that must contain the soul.

Better light— Better sight!

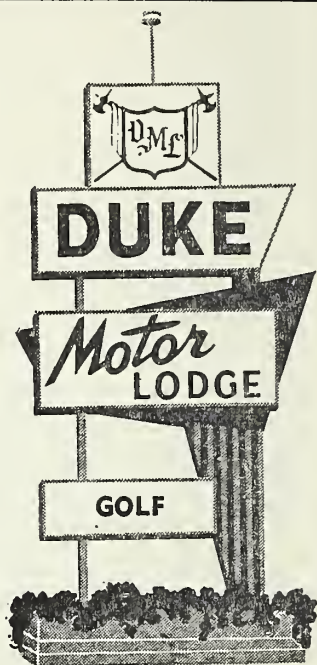
Study time is eyestrain time!
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bulb of the diffused type.
Eliminate glare by making
sure no unshielded lights
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Dr. Hoover's experiences working as a gandy-dancer on the railroad at the age of thirteen and, as a young man, running a farm, impelled him towards the liberalism which he demonstrated during his New Deal years under Tugwell in the AAA. His training as an economist, begun under Professor Commons at Wisconsin, was furthered by his trips to Russia and Germany.

The need for active participation in the defeat of a regime he detested led Dr. Hoover into intelligence work during World War II. In the OSS he was responsible for Northern Europe and Poland and the penetration of Germany from these areas. Dr. Hoover was selected as chairman of the German Standard of Living Board after the war. This board prepared the Hoover Report on German reparations which established that country's post-war level of production.

After returning to the United States Dr. Hoover was appointed to President Truman's Committee on Foreign Aid. The recommendations of this committee, headed by Averell Harriman, came to be known as the Marshall Plan. In more recent years Dr. Hoover's studies of capitalism and totalitarianism required another visit to Russia. Dr. Hoover's Memoirs conclude with an assessment of the possibility that further relaxation of controls in Russia could produce sufficient liberties for her citizens while retaining state control of the economy.

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Hear No Evil

Speak No Evil

The names and most of the faces escape me now, but there were at least fifteen people in that high-ceilinged room; some sitting crosslegged on the floor with drinks in their hands, others glued to the couches in pairs whispering to each other as if conspiring against the crosslegged floorsitters, and still others huddled in random corners and niches. Ensclosed in one dark corner was a couple that merited a prolonged glance or two, perhaps. The one without the goatee, the female (it was quite dark, though not black enough to hide a downy blond chinpiece), gesticulated impatiently, punctuating her violent movements with sharp blasphemies. Her partner, to the contrary, made nimble puppets of his hands and fingers, which danced and bowed continually. And he never uttered a sound.

I was soon to learn that the dextrous deaf-mute was not a guest, but a conversation piece. A party was not a party without a deaf-mute. They were *a la mode*. "*A la mode*" was *passé*. "*Passé*" was *gauche*. Most of the conversation seemed to focus on clamming—clam digging had pre-empted volleyball on the beach as the best way to rid oneself of the burden of leisure hours—and on the upcoming exodus to the West Coast, this year's Mecca.

"Christ baby," growled one of the floorsitters looking up at the only lone female couch dweller, "if we can't clam

near Big Sur (a moment of silence) we can always dive for abalone. Anyways, you'll be working on that novel, no?"

"Look, I am, but I've discovered there's only one way to think, and to really understand what I think. And that's to be up to my ankles in mud, with that low tide smothering just crawlin' in my head. Imbued with that tide. You dig? Draw unemployment checks dig? Clams. Write. See, you clam, and you dig with a rake. You're an artist—you use the same tools. See? Abalone jewelry wouldn't make the same scene."

Alcohol and clams of every size at every temperature and consistency flow far more freely than even such unintelligible conversation. And so, with scotch as an alternative for civility, I disrupted the silent rapport that had been established between the deaf-mute and his enthusiastic admirer, who turned out to be a dental hygienist. Momentarily luring her away from the immobile goatee, I extracted from her a promise to clean my teeth in the near future.

I felt warm and relaxed and talkative, my head sung and I wandered happily from floorsitter to couch dweller and finally back to the floor where I bided my time with a child's puzzle—a plastic map to be navigated and conquered by a shiny blob of mercury.

"The world is a Quohog, but we don't know a clam conceals no pearl," one of the inebriated litterati philosophized off to

ff. The smooth disk of mercury splatted against a tiny plastic rail, the multiple offspring slid at random, but none tumbled in the impregnable center square, which now seemed a whirling vortex of plastic. . . .

Finally free of the puzzle, my eyes met their tan, smooth, lithe legs. I looked up. Two girls, evidently strangers, asked if I could be kind enough to drive them home. "Drive? Damn straight. Anywhere you want to go," I said, "providing, of course, of course," I mumbled. What is the provision anyway, I thought to myself. My mind was like the puzzle, a warm whirlpool, the center of which eluded the simplest of thoughts. Mm, oh yes . . . , the room with the floorsitters and the clams under the provision. "Oh yes. Providing that you have an extra bed. I was thrown out of my rooming house today."

The two girls looked at each other, their furrowed, questioning brows quickly returning to normal with nods of affirmation. The three of us left the high-ceilinged room. It was marvelously cool outside. The night was very clear; it was particularly refreshing owing to the excessive rate of blood flowing toward my face. The numbness of my body was numbed, but my tingled cheeks tingled with liquor, the warmth of the room, and the expectation. Tumbling down the sandy path toward the beach we stopped simultaneously without an apparently common motive. I stood and listened to the furry whistle of the beach grasses in the cool breeze. I supposed they did the same.

It was not until I reached their cottage that I realized that one of the riders was a dental hygienist; I might never have made this discovery if a complete and exact set of plaster of paris dentures had not fallen from her handbag onto the back of the car. She proceeded to click the metal teeth in my ear, while explaining that her summer's homework consisted of

studying what looked like one of those wind-up mouths with teeth that go 'clackety-clack.' And then I remembered she had promised me something.

There were two beds and one room, excluding the kitchen and the bathroom. After boiling some water and pouring it, still steaming, over her pink Dr. West's toothbrush, the dental hygienist insisted I use the sterile brush and her special formula tooth powder. I did so, protesting even as I cut my gums with the hard bristles.

The girls tucked me into the narrow, mildewed bed, covering me with a thin blanket, and then crawled into the large castro-convertible pulling fluffy quilts about their ears. I complained immediately. I was not warm, could I join them? I would bring the warmth of my body as well as the thin blanket. They would be warmer, I would be warmer. The greatest pleasure for the greatest number, I argued. They yielded. I snuggled between them. It was much warmer. The girl to my right fell asleep quickly, snoring softly. The dental hygienist was awake and in full possession of her faculties. We whispered. The other snored. Our feet touched; hers were cold. We embraced and warmed each other's feet. Light snoring to the right continued. We made a date for the following night and slept in one another's arms.

Or should I say we tried to sleep, because some very strange sloshing sounds from the kitchen played an aggravating variation on the unsonorous melody of the female snorer.

"What the hell is that," I whispered through my well-brushed front teeth.

"Clams," she whispered. "Steve, the guy I was with, he gave them to me," she whispered back.

It wasn't until seven A.M., after a most fitful night's rest, that I had the pleasure of seeing about twenty pots, boxes, and

baskets of clams on the kitchen counter. Starved by the lack of sea-water each and every clam emphasized its passing with a watery gurgle. And due to the short intervals at which the many clams expired, and owing to the relative differences in survival time outside of their element, the liquid death rattles had continued for over seven hours.

A sharp knock on the door routed the dental hygienist from bed; I looked out the kitchen window to see who it was. It was Steve. He was carrying a sodden cardboard box which overflowed with wet, brindle clams, still dripping with the ashen mud from which they were unearthed. Since his arms were clutching the box, he

could not speak. But his grey eyes revealed his pleasure in being capable of giving the gift, and the serene smile showed clearly his dedication to the recipient.

I dressed quickly, taking time neither for comb nor brush my teeth. I took a first glance out the window, making sure Steve's happy eyes would not fall upon me. He had put the clams at the girl's feet and was motioning that they were here. Then I left tip-toeing out the back door past the light snoring, without thanking anyone or saying good-bye. I walked around the house to where my car was parked, and left Steve and the dental hygienist to argue over the clams.

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mock oranges

it was cold last december—
mock oranges died early,
shingles that are black were white
and the ice cubes in the river
jammed at trenton
near the bridge.

the ice paths were riddled with trenches,
rubber warriors battled in chain mail,
phone lines cracked,
with water weigh,
and banshees wailed
ephemerally.

the river and the hills grew old and grey
dirt raped the crystal chastity
solstice was spring's larvae
and human heat
melted cocoons,
with shadows.

ode

the nude limbs folded like a chapel roof,
and she sat down on an ice-skinned
rock and smiled green silence to
my face.
her hair dropped like humus
on the leaf rug
and her eyes decayed
and her lips kissed
 the green sprout
 unfolding like a hand.

The Night Air

Conlon's wife roused him out of a vague landscape dream by persistently shaking his shoulder. Her urgent voice penetrated his mind:

"Wiley, wake up, they's somebody at the door!"

Conlon woke with a snort and the red faded away, changed to black as he opened his eyes. "Uhhnh?" he said.

"They's somebody at the door, somebody cockin' at the door, go see what they wants." She poked him in the ribs and he started and moved. He swung his legs out and pulled loose the cover from his body.

He stumbled, yawning and snuffling, toward the front door. Hell of a time to get an honest man out of bed, he thought. If it's a white man they'd better watch out, but if it's a nigger I'll kill 'em.

He got to the door and stood there, listening. Someone was out there all right, talking, whispering, now and then knocking insolently. He coughed and opened the door; the night air was cold. He thought, this is the first time I ever remember anybody out here this time of night. Dammit.

What he saw standing there was neither a white man nor a Negro, but two white, naked girls. It seemed to him there couldn't have been a stranger sight in all the world. Both of them had long straight hair, one blonde and the other brunette; they were both very pretty with large dark eyes; he couldn't remember when he had seen any women prettier; they wore

sweaters and skirts and knee-socks and some kind of little brown leather shoes he had never seen before. They were shivering but somehow he could tell they had been laughing a moment ago; now they looked uncertain and a little scared, but still amused and rather high-handed.

He said, "What can I do for y'all?"

The girls looked at each other with a secret sort of look and the dark-haired one said, "Ahh- could you tell us how far it is to a service station? We've run out of gas on the highway and. . ."

Conlon leaned against the door, scratching the hair on his naked chest to get the blood circulating. Well, that's not so bad, he thought, that won't bother me none. He was looking conjecturally into space, thinking where the nearest gas station was, when he noticed that the girls were exchanging little glances and smirks, punctuated by furtive looks at his chest. What am I doing, he thought, and said.

"Hrm, y'all wait here while I go put on my shirt." He turned away from the door. "Corrie, come talk to these here girls while I git dressed."

As he walked inside he heard them giggle softly. He was embarrassed somehow, unfamiliarly. He waved his hand in the air, found the light hanging by a cord, and switched it on. Vaguely troubled that these young girls should ridicule the habit of fifty-one years, Conlon pulled on his overalls and a work shirt. In the revolving light from the swinging bulb he took his short heavy wool coat from the floor and

put it on. His boots were under the bed somewhere: he groped for a moment, found one of them, sat down on the bed and put it on, and found the other. While he was lacing it he heard his wife talking to the girls. He couldn't make out what they were saying. Wonder where they're from, he thought. He finished tying the bootlace, stood, ran a hand through his grizzled scrubby hair, and tromped out to the door.

"... don't know," his wife was saying, "don't know how far 'tis." As he stopped next to her she turned and asked him, "Wiley, how far is hit to Columbus?"

"Wa'al . . . I don't know," he said, "might be about twenty miles."

He looked at the girls, who were shivering more than ever; a tenuous thought stirred in the back of his mind, maybe I should of asked them to come in, and was still. Why should I ask no strangers in here when they done woke me up? He looked at them and asked.

"Where y'all from at?"

They exchanged one swift glance and the blonde one said, "Oh, we're from Columbus. We go to school there. . ." and the brunette finished, "At MSCW."

Conlon thought, but he couldn't think of what "MSCW" might be or stand for. Some kind of a school. "What's that?" he asked.

A glance, and the blonde one said in her slow, deep voice, "It's a college. Mississippi State College for Women."

"Aw. Oh yeah."

His wife asked, "Where y'all comin' from?"

The dark-haired one said, "Well, we've been to Tuscaloosa at the University and we were going back to the W in my car, and it ran out of gas on the highway—so your house was the only one we could see anywhere, you had this light on on your porch, so we came over to see if we could use your phone."

Conlon spat on the ground beside the porch. "Ain't got no phone," he said.

The girls looked at each other, long this time, and Conlon thought he could see an expression which said, This thing that's happening to us is so bad it's funny. They just don't seem to care, he thought.

"Well, could you tell us how far it is to the nearest service station, then?" the blonde one asked.

"I been studyin' that, and there's a Shell place down the road here 'bout two miles. He pointed in the direction of Columbus."

The girls stared up at him as if expecting him to say more. When he didn't they said "Well . . . thank you," and turned to walk away, their laughing look a little pathetic on their faces.

Corrie turned up her face at his elbow and said, "Wiley, don't you think you oughta—do you think we oughta—should we jest let 'em go walk all the way like that?" She hugged her arms across her chest. "S'cold out here. . ."

Conlon looked at her, then at the shivering figures of the two girls. Yeah, he thought, it is cold . . . but . . . they ought be able to take care of theirselves though just a mile or two—he said, "Wa'al, y'all done walked to that station 'nough time."

"Yeah, but that—me—" she shook her head. "That's different. Hit's different with them."

Conlon opened his mouth to ask why, but she poked him in the ribs like when she wanted him to do something without argument, and he finally said, "Awright. Yeah, awright."

"Hey!" he called out. The two girls stopped far out in the darkness of the driveway. "I guess I can give you a ride to that fillin' station." He seemed to hear an exhalation of breath. "Come on."

"Thank you!" they chorused. Conlon watched them come closer, into the light. They were very nice-looking girls. They looked so young and soft and pretty . . .

the first time he thought, with guilt as if he might hear him thinking, standing there next to him, how much prettier they were than Corrie.

"Jest wait here a minute," he said, "got to git my truck." He stepped off the porch and walked back around the house to the barn. Wonder how old they are to be out here this late at night. Must be near eleven, and they must be near eighteen. Wonder how old they are to be so pretty. How long ago . . . how long ago did Corrie look like that? Must be a long time. He got into the cab of the pickup truck parked by the side of the barn, found the keys on the dashboard, and began trying to start it. The cold engine coughed, phlegmatically, consumptively, furorotically: "*Aw-wau-wau-wau-wau-aw-wau*," he mocked it. Wonder if they're from round here. Don't talk like it. Come on, truck, start. Wonder if they're any of them nigger-loving Yankees I been hearing about. As the ignition ground on and his foot pumped the gas pedal, Conlon tried to think of what it was they had told him about those—he couldn't remember what they were called. One of the sheriff's deputies had come out with two other men and said, If you see any of 'em, get 'em off our land, don't have nothin' to do with 'em. He remembered that they had said these people had real long hair. Wonder where he thought. By God I'll ask them when they get this thing started.

At last the old truck's engine warmed up and began running, and Conlon backed it out from the barn, turned around, and headed out by the house, thinking how he would talk to anybody who wanted to have anything to do with them niggers down the road. The farm next to his was owned by a Negro family who had been there longer, and had almost as much land, as his. A very insulting television antenna stuck up from their house: he knew they couldn't afford one of them gadgets any

more than he could, they were just being smart. They were being smart chopping their cotton so good, too. If anybody starts saying they're as good as me, boy . . .

He stopped the truck next to the house. When the girls came toward the right door, he leaned over, rolled down the window, and said, "Listen, you girls ain't none of these nigger-lovers I done heard about—these Yankees—"

"Oh, no, sir," they said almost in unison, "we don't have anything to do with that, sir!" First time they done called me sir, he thought. The dark-haired one said, "I'm from Jackson, and she's from Chattanooga. We just go to college—we don't have anything to do with the civil rights workers."

Civil rights workers! that was the phrase the sheriff's deputy had used. Well, they didn't really sound Yankee as he imagined a Yankee accent, and they weren't wearing sandals or tennis shoes, like the deputy said they would . . . still, their hair was long . . . oh well, Corrie's hair is long too when she lets it down.

"Wa'al, y'all git in and I'll take you to that gas station."

The girls opened the door and climbed into the cab, saying their "Thank yous." Conlon saw Corrie shut the door and turn off the porch light as he drove away from the house off down the long narrow crooked driveway.

When they got to the highway the dark-haired girl, sitting next to him, pointed up the road, toward Alabama, and said, "See, there's my car. Right down there."

He looked into the night and saw a little light green car, what make he didn't know, sitting a few feet off the road about fifty yards away. "Yeah," he said.

Conlon swung the truck into the road and slowly accelerated, shifting the grinding gears. He could think of nothing to say, and the girls were quiet too. The closed noisy cab was getting warmer now,

even though the heater was not working well; warm and with strange female smells to combat his own odor. The flatness and narrowness of the seat tended to move the dark-haired girl's leg against his every time there was a bump or curve in the road. He could smell her faint sweet perfume; besides which she had a delicate, fresh, female scent unlike the pungent femaleness of Corrie. Conlon and his wife succeeded in taking a bath every two weeks or so in a small washtub one had to squat in to use. Now with this new smell in the cab beside him he became acutely conscious of his own smell and of the girl's measured breathing. He was embarrassed and said to himself with surprise, *I ain't never felt this way before.*

They drove on, the station was farther down the road than he had thought, the girl's leg bumped against his with the movement of the springs. At first he was not bothered by it, but when he thought of her young, lithe, strong body touching him, his mind traced the rest of her body. He remembered the way Corrie had looked, the only night they ever made love in the light, early in their marriage, sinful thing—this girl must look just like she had. As the treasured picture flashed into his mind—Corrie, her hair down about her shoulders, with red nipples and black pubic hair, young and beautiful, sitting naked on the bed next to him—he became sexually excited.

This ain't right, he told himself, stop it, damn you, stop it, I ain't never done this, ain't never had this happen to me except with Corrie, what if the preacher knew, what if God knew what I'm doing—but somehow he could not bring himself to move his leg and give up the titillation. She's doing it on purpose, the little bitch, she knows what it's doing to me—but when he looked he saw the girl could hardly help it, the way the truck was pitching with the road. So there was no one to

blame but himself. And by the time the lights of the filling station finally appeared Conlon wanted the girl (it was no longer Corrie in his mind, it was Corrie's body with her face) so much that he was almost ready to blame himself for having committed adultery. At the meeting Sunday he wouldn't be able to hold up his head.

Mercifully, the girls stayed in the cab while he got out and got a gallon of gasoline in a plastic jug. After putting the jug on the floorboard, he went to the men's restroom and rearranged his clothes. Then he came out, got into the cab, gave the jug to one of the girls to hold, and drove back toward his house.

This time it wasn't so bad. The gasoline smell displaced all others in the cab. The girls were talking to each other about whether their "house mother" would let them in "after hours"—that one of the girls had a "tough Spanish quiz" the next day—that they both had to get up for their "first period," and other things that Conlon couldn't understand. Listening to them talk, he forgot about the contact of the girl's leg on his. He hadn't the slightest idea what they were talking about. He thought, how do they talk so much, he thought, how do they think of all that to talk about? Where did they say they were from? Jacksonville, Chattanooga? He had never been to either place; the largest city he had ever been to was Tuscaloosa, Alabama. I ain't been to Columbus for seems like ten years, he thought. They don't talk that way in St. Line. (When he needed something from a store he went to the little village of St. Line, Mississippi.) Wherever they's from they sure do talk funny.

In a few minutes they reached his driveway. He slowed and crossed to the other lane, rolled to a stop a few yards away from the girl's car on the side of the road. "Wa'al," he said, "here y'are." He listened to them say, "Thank you, sir," and then

said. "I guess I'll help you pour that in here, see you git started right."

They got out of the truck, the girls murmuring more thanks, and Conlon carried the jug of pink gasoline to the car. "What kinda car 's this?" he asked.

"It's a Valiant," the brunette said.

He nodded, though the word meant nothing. "Where's the gas tank?"

She walked to the left rear fender. "Here is," she said, unscrewing the cap.

Conlon opened the jug and tried to pour the gas into the round opening. The neck wasn't long enough to reach; he kept spilling it and it ran down the trunk lid. He stopped pouring and said, "We gotta have smethin' better'n this."

The girls looked at each other helplessly, still with that laughing look, and then the blonde-haired one said, "Oh, I know how!" She stepped to the car, opened a back door, and got out a piece of cardboard. She bent it down the middle and handed it to Conlon. "Like a funnel," she said.

"Good idea, good idea," said the other, and they laughed.

Conlon gave the cardboard to the blonde to hold, picked up the jug again, and began pouring the gasoline down the groove; it worked. He bent over to pour it more accurately, felt his intestines move and flex. I feel a fart coming, he thought. It moved down through him, pushing, irritating, agonizing, and he squeezed it so loud. There was a smell, dissipated quickly in the night air.

The girl began to laugh. She dropped the makeshift funnel and gasoline sloshed over the trunk lid and splashed on his pants before he righted the jug. Both girls were laughing now, but they stopped when he straightened up and frowned at them.

But somehow he was in the wrong, and they were in the right for having laughed at him. Again he was embarrassed, against his will, somehow, for some reason, he

didn't know. A man can't help a thing like that, he thought, that's just nature, why I ain't never had nobody else make me feel this way about things, they ain't nobody to make me feel that way . . . still he couldn't help it. Hell.

After short uneasy stillness Conlon looked at the jug and saw that it was nearly empty now; he picked up the funnel and stuck it into the opening, and turned the bottle up; the gasoline guzzled, hollowly, a sharp odor and a lonely dreary little sound in the stillness of the fall night. "That ought to do you," he said. He screwed the cap back on the jug, resealed the gas tank. "I reckon that'll git you as far as that station, and then you can get some more."

They thanked him and the blonde-haired girl looked in her purse. Holding out her hand to him, she said, "Yes, thank you, sir—and here's for the gas—and everything."

She held three dollar bills. "You welcome," he said, and took them. The girls looked at each other with the beginnings of smirks on their faces. He said, Wa'al, hope y'all have good luck on gittin' back. Y'all oughta take that jug back by the station. G'night, now." He turned and walked to his truck.

Conlon got into the cab and started the engine. He stuffed the money in his coat pocket and looked in the rearview mirror. The girls were both in the car now—their lights were on—they started the car. He put the shift into first and started off. He bumped along the side, swung out into the road and made a U-turn back toward his driveway, straightened out and kept going. As he turned off the little green car flew past him, already going fast. He watched it; soon its lights had disappeared.

He began the slow ride up the long driveway. On each side, close to the road, lay his cotton fields. I guess three dollars ain't too much for getting a man up in the

middle of the night and doing all that for them. Still . . . seems like I was always doing something wrong. Hmmm.

He parked the truck by the barn and went into the house. Corrie was asleep as he undressed, dreaming, her wrinkled eyelids moving. In the other room he could hear the silence where his son had been. In the Army now. Didn't have a girl. Might have grown up like that. Might have laughed at me.

He sat there, remembering passion—remembering Corrie's dead girl baby—and looked through the dirty pane of the screenless window at the starlit field of old dead cornstalks. As he thought of the nameless dark-haired girl sitting next to

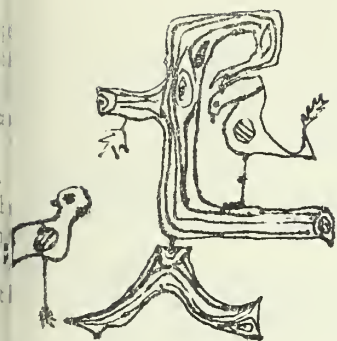
him on the truck seat, the way her fume and her young fresh body smelled, and the way her leg had touching his, remembered passion came alive. He touched Corrie.

Roughly he woke her and took her.

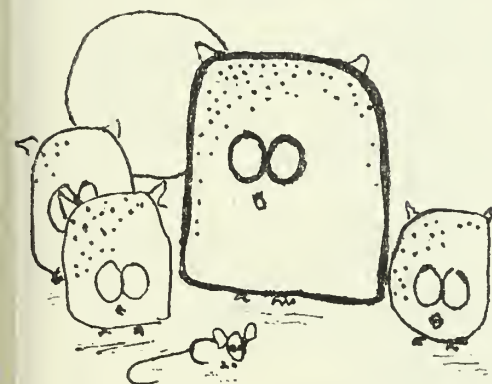
Afterwards she lay happily on his chest, curling her fingers in his hair. Even in October chill he was sweaty, and aware of her smell, of his smell, of the house's smell.

She said, "You ain't been like that for years, Wiley! How come you was like that tonight?"

Conlon said after a long time, "I don't know. Guess hit jest must of been the night air."



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Go to sleep, my thalidomide baby,
close your one and only little eye.
Shut it tight tonight and maybe
your legless feet will cease to kick.
O why did you not die—*in utero* or in birth?
Your helpless flippers symbolize our helpless earth
and all that ails us in our existential portion.
Let others shudder at your foul distortion.
Let others contraceive or choose abortion.
I love you for the twists we twist: the game
with mushroom clouds, the airy astral aim
of cosmonauts to whom the cosmos is naught—
and what we yet shall do to use these means
to foul our own and other nations' genes
and people earth with monsters, till perplexed
it dies sterile and unsexed.
And so I sing (tranquilized by evil):
Shut your cyclops eye and sleep, my devil!

One More Round

Lean your head back, nice and easy, rest on my arm; lean your head back nice and easy, soft and warm. And the lights are low, and the shadows are passing, and if you don't look around, you'll never know that I'm gone. If we'd climbed the stairs a different way, if the music had been flutes, if the drums, oh, if the drums were only softer. Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of; now is the time for all good men to come. Now lay me down to sleep. Now is the time. Now is the time. Now. Now.

Mary, do you see the lights outside the window? Mary, do you see that sign? Lean your head back nice and easy, Mary, lean it on my arm, soft and warm now. Now is the time, now is the time for all good men to come in bed. Mary, do you see the sign outside the window? Mary, lean your head back nice and easy. Mary, Mary, Mary, let your hair hang down. The song, Mary, the song. If the drum were only softer. Mary, lean your head back; Mary, let your hair hang down. Mary, do you see the sign outside the window? Mary, Mary, do you see the drum? Mary, the sign—it's red now, yellow, red now, yellow. Mary, do you see the sign? It's only the drum now, only the drum now, only the drum now. Now is the time, now. Now is the time for all good men, now, now is the time. Red now, yellow now, red now, yellow

now. It's the sign, Mary, do you see the sign? Lean your head back nice and easy, Mary. Mary, let your hair hang down. Sleep you now. Mary, Mary, do you see the sign, red now, yellow now. Now is the time. The drum, Oh, Mary, the drum, the drum. . . . It's just the drum now. Christ is a drum now. Mary, it's only the drum now, the drum. Can't you hear, oh, can't you hear the drum beat? Mary, the drum, can't you hear, can't you hear it calling? Now, now, now, now is the time. Now is the time. Now. Now. Now. Now is the time, is the time, is the time. Now is, now is, time is, time is. Time was, Mary, time was when the sign was green. Red now, yellow now. Red. Now yellow. Now we lay us down to sleep. Sleep you now, rest you now, tomorrow I'll be gone. Sleep you now. Can't you hear the drum call—now is, now is the time for all good men to come, to come, to come to the aid of their country. Now, now, now I lay me down to sleep with a bottle of whiskey at my feet, if I die before I wake, tell the horsemen not to wait. Now I lay me down.

The time has come, the Walrus said, to talk of many things, of rings, and things, and the yellow brick wall. The time has come. Just follow the yellow brick wall to the emerald city somewhere beyond the

sea. Sea. See. A, B, C. See the rain. See the shadows. See the circle close. See the wall. See the rain, the rain, the rain. The day that the rain came down. *Il pleure dans mon coeur. Il pleure.* The circle has come around the ring, around the cozy, rosy ring. The rain, the rain. Can't you hear the rain fall—dum, drum. Can't you hear, can't you hear my heart beat, can't you hear, can't you hear—Jed, Jed, Jed, dum, drum, heart, beat, rain, fall, Jed's dead, rain fall, heart beat, Jed's dead, Ho hum.

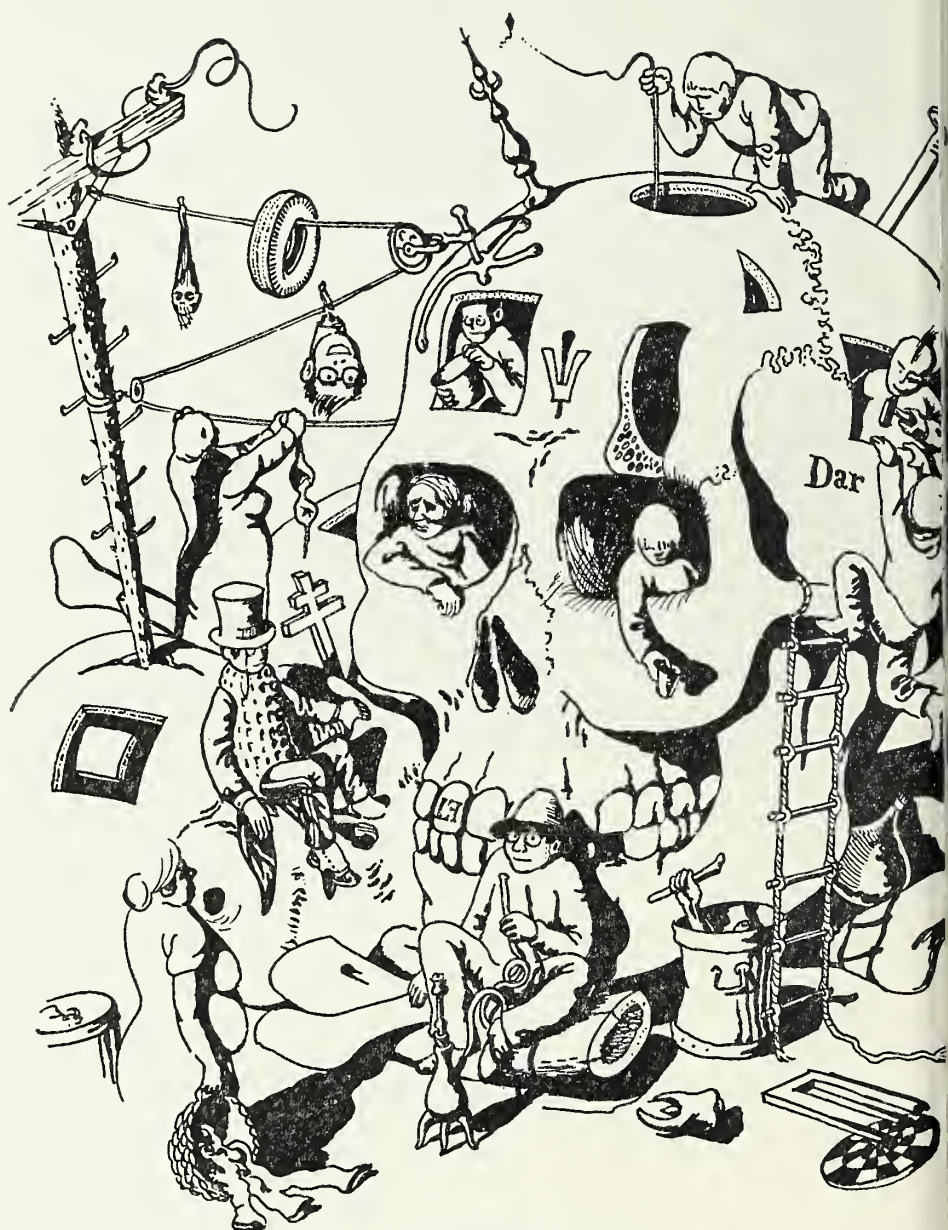
The shade, if the shade were drawn down. Draw down the shade. Blow out the candle. My eyes are dim. The shadows, stop the shadows. I can see the shadows. Red now, yellow now, red now. Jed, Jed, can't you feel my heart beat. Jed said, red, yellow, red, yellow. Blow out the candle, pull down the shade. Stop the shadows. The circle closes. Stop the shadows. Blow out the candle. Oh, Christ, the candle. Stop the shadows. Blow out the candle. Stop the circle. Stop the rain. Can't you hear the rain fall? Jed's dead, Jed's dead.

Can't you hear? The time has come, the Walrus said, to talk, to talk, to talk to the yellow brick wall. The wall and I are lovers. Can't you hear, can't you hear my heart, oh, beat? Jed. Jed. Jed. Jed. The time has come. The time has come. A, B, C. See, the time has come to close the circle and let the shadows pass. Pull down the shade. Blow out the candle. The circle. The shadow passes over his nose. Nobody knows. Over his nose, his rosy, cozy nose. Red now, yellow now, red Jed. The time has come to talk of many things, of yellow brick walls. Pull down the shade. Blow out the candle. Close the circle. *Il pleure dans mon coeur, comme il pleure sur la ville; quelle est cette lueur qui pénètre mon coeur? Il pleure.* Can't you hear, can't you hear the rain fall? Can't you hear, can't you hear my heart call? Baby, the rain must fall, the heart must call—Jed said; Jed, it said. If the shade, if the shade were drawn. If the wall weren't yellow. Pull the shade, blow out the candle, nobody. Now is the time to talk to the wall.

three oclock light and dust are only halfway
filtering red dust I can only see in distances
and light only shines off flies' backs and wings
droning little flies come to lick sweat and bite
the biting small flies fell on my naked thighs
I watched so fascinated
then you, disgusted, scared my flies away,
they who had come at three oclock to partake of my being
my sweaty three oclock flesh you were jealous of

at three oclock I would be alone with slugs and their
vain trails
and exude my body vapors unmolested, sensually alive
in the coolness
I would be soulless at three oclock

but the lingering small stence of your close body!
I felt the threat of my knife the answer
but I could not lift a knife at three oclock
and would not.
I could only plead: this is not night
go find your own dusty three oclock.



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Announcements

The Archive and the English Department will hold their annual Literary As Festival Thursday, April 14, in the Music Room, East Duke Building at 8: Romulus Linney will be the special guest speaker.

THE ARCHIVE

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Whatever Happened to Art Calenti

For a boy, growing up fast but still too slowly, summer is a great many things. But for us, when we were all more or less thirteen, summer was, above all else, the corner of Avon Road by the Bywood Drugstore. It was sitting on the side steps of the drugstore until after dark, smelling the warm beer smell and hearing the noise and laughter and maybe catching a few of the dirty jokes that floated out of the always open door of McGoldrick's tavern, next door. It was sitting on the steps watching the older kids and their girls under the streetlight in front of Larry's poolroom across the street. It was watching them sitting and talking, couples drifting off into the shadows when it got dusk, dancing or maybe just listening to the radio, because Larry always had the volume turned up loud, and all summer long there were the soulful summer-time sounds, the exciting beat of Rock and Roll, of Georgie Woods, the man with the goods, the boss with the hot sauce, puttin' down a pound of sound over WDAS, the home of the big beat in Philly, Pa. It was watching and listening, feeling the closeness of the music, but mainly it was wishing and hoping, wishing you were old enough to have a car and dreaming about what you would do if you had one,

cruising around with the top down and the radio blaring, giving the girls on the sidewalk that hungry look, unless you already had one or two on the seat beside you. It was watching and wishing and dreaming, getting restless and anxious, getting very tired of being just a little too young. Darkness and night came too quickly, it was summer evenings by the drugstore were beautiful. You looked forward to them all day, and the days went slowly, because in the daytime it was hot and dirty and usually there was very little to do. Which is one reason, perhaps, why a man named Art Calenti became a big part of that particular summer. Art Calenti was something to do.

He was a man in his late twenties, when he lived alone with his mother, a bulky old Italian woman, and her grey cat. He had a house on Greenhill Road, across the street from Mike Manniola. Mrs. Manniola was a good friend of the old woman and in the slow summer afternoons, she would send Mike to the store for her and have him go across the street to take her a pitcher of iced tea and to work in the little garden that she kept beside her house. At first, years earlier, Mike did these things only because his mother asked him, but later, by the time he was thirteen,

did them partly because of Art, because it was very good to Mike. He had a badminton set that he would string up in his driveway for Mike. He built like a backboard and a rim on the telephone pole in front of his house and whenever someone stole the net, he always bought a new one. And sometimes he would take Mike swimming, or up to the local park to see the Phillies play. The rest of us knew Art only vaguely, through Mike, and we knew him as a lonely man who was like a rich uncle for Mike, and who Mike got as much out of as he could. If we thought of him at all, that was the way it was at first, until some of the guys talked Mike into letting them in on his good thing, and then we all got to see Art and we all found out about him. He was a small man, thin and very strong, but healthy and well-coordinated, a good badminton player, but not much at basketball. He was hairy, ugly, and his most distinguishing feature was a thick lower lip that protruded out, it seemed, far beyond his nose, and covered completely his yellowed teeth. It was a feature, we later speculated, that was perfectly suited to his talents. We called him Art the Lip. I guess that all towns and all growing boys are supposed to know a queer at one time or another, and, at thirteen, Art the Lip was the one that happened for the first time one Friday night late in June, a night heavy with heat and humidity and the smells of the summer. McGoldrick's was crowded after dark. The men, after working all week, were spending their money; they were happy and full of fish and beer and the happy atmosphere overflowed through the open door and spread out onto the street and across the street to Larry's, where the radio sent the beat out into the night. It was a happy evening, very full

and alive and restless, and the corner seemed to stretch far out into the twilight. Bro came out of McGoldrick's, where he had been looking for his father, and walked down to the steps of the drugstore. You could see that he was excited about something. With Bro, you could always tell.

"Hey, guess what," Bro said, "Art the Lip's a queer." Just like that, Bro said it. "What?" I asked.

"No kiddin'. Listen to this. You know that baseball team he has, that me and Mike were supposed to play for?"

"Yeah," We all said.

"Well, we had our first practice today. It was unbelievable. These guys were the biggest bunch of spastics you ever saw, and they don't have uniforms or nothin'. It ain't no team; it's just a bunch of raggedy kids. Half of them don't even have gloves. It's ridiculous. And the Lip's really a scream. I know ten times more about baseball than he does. He can't even hit. You should have seen him trying to hit fungoes to the infield."

Bro stopped to laugh.

"Well that don't make him a queer," Charlie Kena said. "What happened?"

"I don't know if I can tell you or not," Bro said. "Christ, it's funny as hell. Where's Mike?"

"He's at his grandfather's" Charlie said. Charlie was Mike's cousin.

"Well, I'll have to tell you myself then," Bro said. "You won't believe it, but I swear it's true. After practice, he took us over to his house for some watermelon, and he had this watermelon down in the basement, so when we get down there, he all of a sudden asks me if I have a jock-strap on. So of course I said 'no,' and Mike says 'no,' too. Well, he says Mike don't need one, but I'm a big boy and I ought to have a jock on.

"'Naw,' I said, 'I don't need a jock, not to play baseball.'"

"'Yeah,' he says, 'You better let me check and see. Pull your pants down and let me see.'"

"So I did, and I swear he went wild. He started hitting it with his hand, up and down like a spring, and then he started saying, 'C'mon, get it hard, get it hard'; he was like a madman."

We were all laughing like crazy with our mouths wide open, and Bro was having a hard time himself trying to keep from cracking up.

"Are you kiddin' me?" I finally managed to ask.

"No shit," said Bro, "Ask Mike. He was there. He was laughing like hell the whole time, and I was trying to figure out what the hell to do."

"What did you do?"

"I finally pushed him away and pulled up my pants and Mike and I got the hell out of there."

"Weren't you scared?" I asked him.

"Hell no," Bro said, and he gave me his look of greatest disdain. "If that puny bastard ever tried something, I could kill him."

And Bro could have. He was big for his age and strong, and he wrestled for the junior high. He was kind of the leader of the corner-loungers. Sometimes he would go into McGoldrick's after his father and stay there if his father would buy him a beer or two, and lately he had been hanging across by Larry's once in a while. Most of the rest of us might have forgotten about the incident with the Lip, but not Bro. Bro kept on playing for the Lip's baseball team, which, we found out one night when we went to watch them practice, was just as Bro had described it. And Bro kept experimenting with the Lip. Bro was interested, but Mike, who maybe had known all along

how the Lip was, was kind of uneasy about the whole thing. It wasn't that Mike was like that or anything, it was that he got a little nervous when he talked about the Lip, because Mike I think, felt kind of responsible for bringing a family friend out in the cold and he was afraid that he would catch holy hell from his mother if we ever told any of the things to the Lip that he talked about doing on those nights in front of the drugstore.

On the fourth of July, the Phillies were home, playing a double-header with the Pirates, and the Lip took Bro and me up to see the game. The rest of us were swimming at the Bywood Pool, and after supper we went up to the corner where we waited for Bro and Mike.

"How was it?" I asked Bro, where the two of them around the corner, grinning from ear to ear.

Bro slapped Mike on the thigh. "I'm the son, sit up front with me," he said, trying to imitate the Lip's dark, heavy voice. Bro and Mike both laughed and went on grinning.

"It was amazing," Mike said. "First of all, we had a mad dash to get into the back seat. It was funny. The Lip was kind of watched, trying to figure out what was going on."

"And then I ended up in front," Bro continued the story, "And he slapped his hand down on my leg and says, 'well, you're the son—' he always calls me son—'how's it go?' And I said 'fine,' and I took his hand and put it on his own leg, and he kind of grunted." Bro and Mike gave a good illustration and we all kind of snickered and then there was a long silence.

"Well, look," Bro said after a while. "Look what good old Lippy gave me. He reached in his pocket and pulled out some firecrackers and a couple of

nbs. "He says, 'Here, son, have a good e with these.'"

"Damn," I said, "That was pretty nice him. We can set them off down at the works tonight."

Uh, uh," Bro said. "I got plans for se. We're gonna set 'em off on Lip's ch."

Wait a minute," Mike said. "You ter not."

Aw hell, Mike," said Bro, "What's the ter with you, afraid of your damn ther?"

No, it just ain't nice, that's all, after he e 'em to you. And besides, what if finds out I did it, then I'd really get in ble, and we wouldn't be able to go to games or anything any more."

Aw, shit," said Bro.

hey could both sound pretty self-teous at times.

Well, count me out," Mike said, and he right away, and walked down the t toward his house. It was starting et dark, and the corner was very t. We were the only people there. got a better idea," Charlie Kena said. 's get some crab apples from Marullo's and put the cherry bombs in there throw them up on his porch. That we can get away quicker."

ood," said Bro. He looked at me. comin', Toad?" he asked.

are," I said. "Of course I'm comin'." the three of us, Bro and I and Charlie went into McGoldrick's and got k of matches from Bro's father and we walked down the street and got pples and we sneaked over and ed behind a bush across the street the Lip's house. Charlie hollowed e apples and put the cherry bombs and Bro lit them. I threw them, e I was a pitcher and I had the im. The first one bounced off the door and fell on the porch, burning

and spluttering like crazy. Lip must have been sitting in the living room, because just as I let loose with the second one, the door opened and the crab apple, cherry bomb and all, went sailing past the Lip's ear into the house. We heard some glass break and then both cherry bombs went off at once and the Lip jumped a foot off the ground and this damn grey cat shot out of the house and somewhere inside the old lady screamed like she had seen Christ on the cross or something, and Bro and Charlie and I took off like hell from behind the bush and ran down the street. We doubled back and met at the corner, out of breath, more from laughing than running.

"It was the funniest thing I ever saw," Mike said the next day. "I watched the whole thing from my window."

It was about a week later when the last of the Lip's firecrackers ran out. Then we just used crab apples for a while, and then eggs, that Charlie swiped from his refrigerator. I don't think the Lip ever figured out who it was who was treating him to this nightly bombardment, but he must have suspected something, because, although Mike and Bro still played ball for him and he still took them places, they were always a little bit colder toward him than before, and whenever the four of us were together around him, there was always the secret grinning and hitting each other with knowing gestures and trying, usually unsuccessfully, to keep from laughing out loud. The Lip got into the habit of taking a walk down to the mail box every evening about dusk, and we would sit on Mike's front steps and watch him looking around very suspiciously. He walked very slowly.

And then one night, during an especially heavy siege of eggs, a cop car suddenly appeared a few houses down the block, and as we all split up and tore off in different

directions, we knew that that particular phase of our attack was over for good. And Mike said that he was glad, because his parents had a feeling that we were the ones behind it, and they had said that if we were, it would be the last that Mike would ever see of any of us again.

So for a week or so, life went back to normal around the corner. We sat by the drugstore in the evenings and talked and reminisced about old times with the Lip and watched the older kids across the street at Larry's and listened to the music and smelled the beer in McGoldrick's, and that's the way it was that summer, except for Bro, who could go into the tavern and join his father and listen to the men talk, and play shuffleboard with them. The weeks dragged by into August, the dog-days. Charlie Kena went away for the month, to the shore with his parents, and Bro, more and more, was spending his time in the bar or across the street at Larry's, so Mike and I were the only ones left on the corner. The Lip's baseball team had somehow petered out, and Bro had been leaving him alone for a few weeks. Mike still helped Mrs. Calenti and Art still took him to ball games and movies and things, but Mike didn't like to talk about him and I myself had never even really met him, although he knew who I was, as a friend of Mike's, and I don't think that he liked me too much, because I was the only one that he never invited to go along on his outings with Mike. Maybe it was because he and the rest of the guys were all Catholics and I wasn't. I don't know, but I thought about it sometimes. Anyway, by the middle of August, Art had almost faded from memory, and things were very dull on the corner by the drugstore. The summer had become very quiet.

It was a lethargy born of boredom, a

drowsiness that crept into your blood and wouldn't let go, until you thought the day would never pass and when a week ended you wondered what you had done with the time. Most nights we didn't even go on the steps anymore, and when we did it was only for a few minutes, because no one came around and there was nothing to see. And then one day, as August went toward an end, I kind of began to realize that Fall was just around the corner and vacation was almost over. The realization must have come to Bro at the same time that it came to me, because I met him one night late in August, quite by coincidence, at the corner. We sat together by the drugstore, listening to George Woods on the radio over at Larry's, trying to reach out and grasp the essence of a fading summer. We tried to find something good to do with the hours before darkness, but there was nothing, and darkness was coming sooner and sooner every night, shutting off the faucet of summer until it was only a slow steady-lived dripping, and we were beginning to count the drops that were left before school started.

What happened that night happened so quickly that I was hardly even conscious of doing it. All of a sudden, the light green Volkswagen was rolling down the street and I started shouting at the top of my lungs, as loud as I could:

"Lip! Lip! Lip!"

Bro looked at me very strangely for a moment, and then he joined me, and we shouted, "Lip!" together, or more or less together, at the vanishing green car. When it was gone, we sat down again and looked at each other and laughed. Another summer evening was gone.

The next night, though, Bro and I were again at the corner, and I was kind of surprised when Mike showed up, too.

"Man," Mike said, looking direct

he with that self-pitying, self-righteous look of his. "You really fixed things up good for me."

"What?" I said, honestly having no idea what he was talking about.

"Yellin' 'Lip' at Art last night." I remember that I felt like hitting him because of that look on his face, that self-righteous look.

"Why?" I asked.

"He told my mother about it, and now I'm not allowed to hang around with you guys any more, because of that."

"Jesus," I said, "Just because of that?" Mike nodded.

"You're not allowed to hang around with any of us, or just me?"

"None of you. You or Bro or Charlie."

"Charlie," I said. "Christ, he's your cousin. And besides, he's down the shore."

"That's what my mother said."

We sat on the steps saying nothing for a long time. Mike still had that look on his face and if he wasn't my friend, I really could have pounded him. I looked at his face until I couldn't stand it any more.

"Well, Christ," I said finally. "What do you want me to do?"

Mike thought a minute. "You got to tell him up and say you're sorry. That's the only possible way I'll ever get to hang around with you guys again."

"Call him up! You got to be crazy! I ain't gonna call that bastard."

"You got to," Bro said. "Think of Mike."

"Hell with Mike," I said. "Besides, I'd be lyin'. I ain't sorry. He's a damn queer, ain't he?"

Mike was quiet for a moment.

"He ain't no queer," Mike said, very quietly and softly. "We made all that stuff

remember my mouth kind of dropped open, and if I hadn't been too surprised to

move, I'm sure that right then I would have pulverized Mike, regardless of the fact that he was my friend and was smaller than me. I looked at Bro and Bro nodded.

"Go call him up," Bro said, and he gave me a dime. It was the only thing he ever gave me in his whole life.

"Yeah," I said, suddenly kind of scared. "I guess I have to."

I walked into the drugstore in kind of a daze and dialed the number that Mike had given me. I recognized Art's voice when he answered the phone.

"Is Mr. Calenti there?" I asked.

"This is Mr. Calenti," he said. From his voice, it sounded as if he knew who was calling and was looking right through me over the wires. I started in with the little speech I had made up. It was deathly hot in the phone booth and I was sweating hard.

"This is Toad," I said. "I'm calling to tell you that I'm sorry about what happened last night, and I'll never do anything like that again. I'm really. . ."

"Well, Toad," he said, "Let me tell you that that wasn't a very nice thing to do. In fact, it was a downright rotten thing. That and everything else you boys have been doing this summer."

He paused and I waited, hating him, hating him so much I felt like telling him right then what a no good bastard I thought he was, but I thought of Mike, and I waited. He was talking again.

"First of all, you should never ridicule a person for physical defects that he can't help or control. That's the worst thing you can ever do. All my life I've tried to help kids, to give them advantages and things that I never had when I was growing up."

Christ, I thought, stop using them big words. It sounded like he had his own little speech all ready and was reeling it off from a piece of paper. He sounded

like some guy in a newspaper column about delinquents. I wasn't no damn delinquent.

"Right now I'm going to school at night," he continued, "I've worked hard and in a few months I'm going to be a teacher, and I'm going to help kids. That's all I ever wanted to do. I try to be good to you kids, and you act like this. I just don't understand it."

"Yes, Sir," I said. "I'm very sorry."

"Now," he said, getting down to business finally, I thought. "I've told Mrs. Manniola all about this and I don't know whether she'll let Mike still associate with you boys or not."

"I'm sorry," I said, jumping at the chance. "I hope you'll let Mike hang around with us."

"Well, it's not my decision," he said, "But I will tell Mrs. Manniola that you called and that I think it took a lot of courage for you to do that."

"Yes, Sir," I said. "Thank You."

"All right," he said. "Good-bye."

He hung up and I walked outside the drugstore where Bro and Mike were waiting. They looked up at me.

"Well?" Mike asked.

"I don't know," I said. "I don't think I care either."

"Yeah," Mike said. "Well, It's your fault to begin with."

"I called him, didn't I? What else do you want?" I waited for an answer, but there was none. "Why don't you go home and find out what your mother's going to do."

"I ain't gonna ask that already. You just called him."

"You might as well," Bro said. "You're not supposed to be up here with us now anyway."

So Mike went home, and Bro and I sat down to wait, saying nothing. Once I said, "I hope Mike can hang around with

us," feeling that maybe it had been my fault after all. Mike came back quick and you could tell by looking at him what the answer had been.

"Sorry, Mike," I said.

"That's O.K.," Mike said, and he was different then. He really meant that was O.K. "You did the best you could."

Bro was sitting there clenching his fist, he was as mad as I had ever seen him for some reason.

"I'll fix that bastard," Bro said. "That goddam queer bastard." He stood up. "Hit me, Toad," he said.

Bro went to a lot of movies, and I guess he believed that stuff like that really happened. I knew it didn't, but I was in a mood to refuse such an invitation. I leaned back and smashed him in the nose with everything I had. It didn't knock him down—I wished later that it had—but it broke his nose wide open. He ripped a piece off his shirt and went into Mr. Goldrick's.

"My old man will kill him," he said.

He came out of the bar a few moments later with his father, and they started walking down the street toward the Lip house. Bro's old man was either drunk or pretty high. He was a big man, and he worked in an aircraft factory and he was strong as a bull. He tottered as he walked down the sidewalk. Mike and I looked at each other for a minute and then we got up and followed, keeping a good distance behind. Bro's old man walked up on the Calenti porch, while Bro waited at the street. Lip opened the door and stood there, stock still for a moment in that patch of light in the doorway. The whole dark night seemed centered in that one spot. And then all of a sudden Lip was on his back and somebody screamed somewhere and Bro's old man grabbed the Lip by his collar and stood him up in the doorway and hit him again and

cept hitting him, all over, until, as quickly as it had begun, it was over and the Lip was lying in a broken heap in his doorway.

I looked for Mike, but he was gone, and Bro and his father were gone too, but I was held in kind of a fascination by the body in the light on the porch. I stood there for what must have been a long time, watching the dark blood on the porch as it mingled with the burn marks from firecrackers and the stains of rotten eggs. And everything seemed very dead, dying out in that last brief moment of passion and violence, like a dying ember that flares up momentarily before it becomes forever the ashes in August.

Well, that was all a long time ago, and it might not have happened exactly that way, but that's the way I remember it. After that summer, we never spent much time on the corner by the Bywood Drug-

store. When we got older, Larry's was closed down and McGoldrick's, once so inviting a thought, never again held the attraction for us that it did in the summer of our thirteenth year. The Lip moved away from the neighborhood that Fall, and Bro and Mike and Charlie and I have all gone our own ways, and we haven't seen each other much at all in past years. We never did, really, after that summer. I don't even get down to the old neighborhood much any more, but once in a while, on summer evenings when everything is soft and warm and free, I think about the old days and the old guys. And I kind of wonder what happened to the magic of those summer nights on the corner. And, sometimes, I even wonder what ever happened to Art Calenti, because, in some way that I can't really explain, I think I've kind of grown to love him.

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Another Room in the Castle

Second Third wanted to move to another room in the castle, but I was in charge that week and wouldn't let him. Third Third was out to find the fireflies and wasn't speaking to either of us lately anyway. So when I saw Father coming up the flagstones with the Yellow Cab waiting beyond the gates, I had to catch them both and make them go to the dungeon. Of course I had to stay there with them and that's why when the doctor came in with Father, none of us moved. None of us was aware of the trip from the hospital to Grandma Gussy's house for Pappy's funeral.

Bonnie was standing alone when the cab stopped in the yellow pebble driveway. I saw her walking slowly towards us, dressed in black. Second Third saw the grey shingle house with its green painted tin roof (the original part of the house had been there since it was built in 1832 by a pirate) and told me about it. Third Third wanted to run along the path, between the broken walnut tree and the wisteria. He wanted to run, as we had when we had been a child together, over the lawn, under the trees, and by the roses that crowded near the out-reaching porch. But the roses reminded me of the red arthritic inflammations inching toward

the joints in Grandma Gussy's arms, and I told him no.

"Hi David, it's good to see you," Bonnie said, stopping just in front of us.

I was in charge so I made us say hello and smile.

"How long . . ." she started to ask more to Father, who was beside me, than to me.

"All afternoon," Father answered.

"How are you?" I made us ask. Second Third laughed and shouted, making a room in the castle, and Third Third said nothing.

"Me? I'm fine," she answered, starting by the question. "Come on in," she said after a pause, "it's cold and windy here." She took our arm. No, shouted Second Third. She's our cousin, I told him. She's outside, pleaded Third Third, the sun is bright the sky is clear and the wind blows our hair.

Bonnie tugged gently at our arm, and made us follow her, with only a third of our heart. We walked slowly up the grassy path, with the shade from the walnut tree falling on us at intermittent intervals. The wind blew our hair into our face and I saw Bonnie holding her hat tightly over her head with her left hand. When we turned to go into the side entrance to

arch, I saw Uncle Frank sitting on the arch glider, swinging slowly back and forth.

"Well David," he called to me, ignoring my father, "you made it."

Second Third and I both like Uncle Frank, because he was a doctor, even if he was from West Virginia, and he hated my father's guts.

"Hello, Uncle Frank," I said almost shyly.

"Why don't you go on in and tell them that you're here, Charles?" he said to my father, who went on without speaking.

"How have they been treating you boy?" he asked me, after Father had gone through the glass storm doors and could not hear.

"Fine," I said. The room is terrible, Second Third told me to say. They don't let us go outside, Third Third thought. "Are you cold, son," he asked, "you seem to be trembling."

"Why don't we all go inside where it's warmer and the wind isn't blowing?" Bonnie asked.

Uncle Frank stood, pushing the glider backwards. It rocked back and forth as he led us toward the door. "Tell you what, David," he said, "if I can arrange to have you transferred to the hospital at Charleston, how would you like that? We could go hunting and fishing on good weekends, and I'm sure it would do you good to get away."

Yes, Third Third shouted to me, say yes.

You could go back to college if you wanted, and maybe even to medical school at."

He lives in a house of many mirrors, Second Third whispered, don't go.

I have a lot more money than your father has, you know, and we could do a lot with it."

"I can't say," I answered. Tell him

no, Second Third whispered. Tell him yes, said Third Third.

He opened the door and walked in. I held it open for Bonnie. We followed her into the main dining room, that opened onto the porch.

"We've already had the service, we didn't think you'd . . . we didn't think you'd mind," Uncle Frank said as we walked past the table about which all the family seemed to have gathered every Christmas and Easter. The chairs were empty now. The room is dark, Second Third said. Can we go back outside, Third Third asked. In a moment, I told him.

Grandma Gussy came out of the parlor as we passed the hall next to the stairs that led to the television room and the breakfast room.

"David, it's so *good* to see you," she said opening her arms.

I hugged her tightly and Third Third begged please, please can we go outside.

"Have you seen your grandfather?" she asked. "He's in the casket in the parlor."

Who is in the casket in the kitchen? Second Third asked.

I looked into her face, at the large nose and green eyes. I noticed that she was wearing black, and it was the first time I had ever seen her in black, she always wore grey.

"Bonnie, take your cousin in the parlor, I have to go into the television room and keep your two old bag aunts from killing each other with vitamin pills," she said limping past us, leaning on her cane.

"Let me help you, Grandmother," Uncle Frank said.

"Just get your hiney out of my way, I'm young enough to be your mother," she told him, laughing.

Bonnie was covering her mouth with her hands, trying to keep from laughing

too loudly, as we watched Gussy nearly drag Uncle Frank along with her. I looked at Bonnie, "She's crazy," I said. *Another* room in the castle! Shouted Second Third.

Bonnie looked at me, then poked me in the stomach, and laughed. They're *all* wiggers! Said Third Third.

Bonnie tried to look serious, but laughed quietly once more before she took me into the parlor.

We crossed the doorway and looked around. The casket lay open upon its stand, next to the baroque piano. This room is straight nineteen-hundred, Second Third said, as I looked at the plush but straight-backed chairs, the globe lamps, and the American Gothic portraits of a great-great-aunt and uncle, whose eyes followed us as we walked across the room.

The corpse looked healthier than Pappy ever had. It looked thin, and its cheeks were colored. The stubble that would have been a five o'clock shadow, if it hadn't been white, was gone, and his skin was smooth. I hardly knew him.

"He looks well, doesn't he?" Bonnie asked. I nodded. "You never saw him when he was really sick. He looked so bad, they did wonders with his face, don't you think?"

Who sent the flowers, Third Third asked me. "Who sent the flowers?" I asked Bonnie for him.

"The workmen down at Canton Railway. They would have come but Uncle Frank asked them not to, he was afraid the strain might be too much for Gussy. He says that if Pappy had lasted another week, there would have been a double funeral." When she finished, she looked at me and took my arm. We turned and walked back out, the painted stares following us sternly. When we passed the doorway, we saw Uncle Fred standing at the hall closet.

"Do you think it's cold enough for topcoat, David?" he asked.

The weather is perfect, Third Third said. It's too cold to go out at all, Second Third answered. I could say nothing. "I didn't think it was really that cold when I was out, Uncle Fred," Bonnie answered for me.

"Maybe I'll just wear a sweater then," he said.

"Are Daddy and Uncle Charley in the T.V. room?" Bonnie asked.

"They're at the breakfast table, making their next million dollars."

"If they get paid by the word, they might make it," she answered.

While they were talking I walked to the door of the television room and waited there for Bonnie.

"Well, I don't think his father should have brought him in the first place, Gussy only knows what he's likely to *do*."

"Oh, I don't think it's anything like that, I think he's just a little hard of hearing, that's why he looks at you that way."

"Well, if you ask me, it's all a matter of body chemistry. If his parents had just made him eat the right food and take the vitamins there wouldn't be a thing wrong with him, not a *thing*."

"I still don't think he should be out. I don't think you can trust his kind."

I could kill her! Second Third said. No! shouted Third Third. Stop it, stop! I told them. I felt them fighting me at each other for control.

"David," Bonnie said, "she didn't mean it."

I could hardly hear her. I leaned against the door frame for support. "She didn't mean it." But I was already at the dungeon door and fighting to hold off the other two Thirds in. "Don't tremble," was the last we heard.

We were gone only a little while and

time, for we came back to find the wind gusts whipping our hair about our forehead and flapping our pants cuffs about our legs. We were standing apart from the rest of the mourners, atop the hill in the cemetery that great-grandfather had chosen to be the family plot because from here you could see the house where all his children had been born. Second Third looked up across the plots, across the highway and at the grey house a quarter mile away. Third Third saw the trees standing closely by it, the hedges further in front and the green grass lawn of the cemetery. He felt the warm sun on our cheeks between the gusts of cold that blew in our face. I watched the casket be-

ing lowered into the grave by our five uncles and our father. I saw that Bonnie was standing beside me, wearing only her black dress. She was noticeably cold. She held herself as tightly as she could and her hands were clenched at her side. I looked at her. She shivered and I took her hands in mine and put them into my coat pocket, making her stand before me. The house, the mourners, and the sunlight on her hair that flew from beneath her hat were all before me. "I know they didn't mean it," I said, "It just takes time for me to tell the others."

She looked at me and did not understand it now, but I knew that didn't really matter.

i took the experience of my days

i took the experience of my days with you
by the garden pond i went for goldfish
and the pictures of our faces broke
when we ruffled them with little stones
you took the experience of my days with me
and we dabbled our toes in the garden pond
i snatched the flowers where they slept
in winter soil i could not wait
for anything to die

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The sun slants on the cracking walls;
 These faces reek of age.
When they were children they could rage
Or dance;
 the sheep were brought to frenzy
On a whim: ran for refuge to the water's edge
And trembling, huddled on the slender ledge,
While childish warriors crept to conquer them.
Once, the youngest children might have warred
To own a twisted stick that served as toy—
And now the ancient cheeks are scarred:
 No tiny victory allays
The sameness of the crawling days.

DREAM

You are fastened to me
and I feel
that I am giving birth;
you rise
above me, rosy-winged
and ringed
with circles of the sun.

My eyes
cannot quite watch this thing
that I have raised,
that over me
lifts one boned and feathered wing
to eclipse the sky.

I feel
that I am giving birth,
and lying
on this wide and fertile earth
turn half away.

Startled breath
disturbs the heated day,
as from my thighs
the great bird opens suddenly
and flies.



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TASTE THE DIFFERENCE

Distances

The rose-brown walls were in deep shadow; the room was dark with the duskiness that comes with the first stars or with a spring storm. A small, scratched mahogany table, a makeshift bar, stood in front of one of the windows; the glasses and partially empty bottles seemed to float in the thin afternoon light. A girl in a red linen suit, Sally Ramsay, stood near the table, looking through the glass curtains which filmed the window, at the thick storm clouds which smothered the late sky. She opened the window; a cool breeze blew into the room, making the glass curtains blow from behind the heavy blue drapes and wrap like long, transparent fingers around her. The smell of rain in the air almost masked the smell from the paper mill north of town. The street was empty of people . . . only hurrying cars and seagulls flying low into town. The woman in the house across the street rushed out to take in her porch cushions and to shut off the garden sprinkler. It was going to be a big, slobbering storm without thunder or lightning. Like the storms that Sally and her brother had watched together from the front porch when they were young, and like the hurricanes that had made rapids in the driveway and left the goldfish lying dead all over the back yard. The first fat drops began to fall.

Sally picked up a decanter of sherry and a fine sherry glass and walked to the fireplace. Two armchairs sat on either side, seeming to dig the claws of their griffin feet into the pile of the Persian rug. She sat on the rug and leaned against the side of the armchairs. She poured a glass of sherry and stared at the cold ashes in the fireplace. Were ashes like snowflakes, were two the same? The pendulum clock in the hallway sounded loudly in the room. "Now in the dark' . . . the semi-dark, a way . . . 'I hear the passing of dark time and all the sad and secret flowing of life.' Thomas Wolfe . . . Virginia Woolf . . . the Big Bad Wolf and Practical Magic . . . all living in their neat little brick houses. While Sally Ramsay builds her house of mud, praying all day for the sun to shine, listening all night to the backward clock that reverberates through her . . . toc-tic, toc-tic, toc-tic. (She shouldn't talk to oneself, you know, Sally. They'll say you're crazy." She refilled her glass.

Her brother would be home soon; she ought to start dinner. Her parents were in Washington for her father's sister's funeral. They should have gone, and John. But then it really wouldn't have made much difference to anybody anyway. Everybody had known for a year that Aunt Sue was dying. Her parents planned

ly wouldn't have gone if they hadn't wanted an excuse to go to Washington. Sally had never been to a funeral. No, that was wrong. She had been to her grandmother's funeral; they had all gone and she had fallen asleep at the church part of it because she and John had gone turtle egg hunting the night before. That was ten years ago, when they still owned the beach house.

The myrtles had grown thick around the house, and on the back porch had been two green window-boxes . . . the bottom had rotted out of the one on the left. The house had been white like all the rest of the houses on Sullivan's Island, but it had had a red tin roof instead of green shingles, and the shutters had been black, not green. Right above the garage and below the kitchen window a faint blue and white sign that read "The Seashell" had been tacked. Mr. Ramsay had done that when they bought the house. The Ramsays liked the house because, although it looked small and crumbling, it was comfortable and private. That evening, John and Sally had sat for a long time on the front steps, watching for the full moon to rise high above the water.

John, his arms wrapped around his knees and his chin jabbing his knees, was standing through the gap made by the path to the beach at the light-studded blackness of the Atlantic Ocean. Sally had been sideways on the steps, propped against a railpost, holding oleander leaves which she pulled from her poison-sticky fingers from the bush and leaned against the house and spread them over the stairs. Rays from the lighthouse shone on the new one, built in triangular shape at the west end of the island and painted red and white, the strongest on the East End. . . . swiveled over their heads and filtered from the windows of houses over the beach.

"John, do you remember Grampa?"

"Not very well. I was six when he died. I had just started the first grade and I cried when Mama wouldn't let me go to school."

"But what was he like? Was he anything like Daddy is?"

"His voice was like Daddy's. And he talked a lot and when he laughed, everyone else laughed too. But he smoked cigars all the time. What are you asking for, Sal?"

"Well, everyone else I know has a grand-something to talk about and to go over to their house for Sunday dinner and to give them candy money, and I don't have anyone."

"Pet used to give us a dollar a month."

"But you had to go see her to get it, and then she always forgot about it. Going to her house wasn't any fun, anyway; she always scared me . . . even if she was once Daddy's mother like Mama's our mother. All she ever does is sit in that chair and mumble. And that Mrs. Nettles, standing there all the time to feed her and wipe her chin and put her arm back in her lap when it slips."

"Hush, Sally! You shouldn't talk that way about a sick person. Especially when they've already died. Pet couldn't help being like that. Besides, you know she only gave us the dollar because she was lonely; we should have gone to see her without a bribe."

"Well, the only good thing about her house was that there were always gumdrops in the pink jar. Anyway, I forgot that she was dead. Mama told me the other night when it started raining and windying and we all had to get up and move everything off the porch. Only we forgot to get the mattress from one of the cots, and the sheets were all purple in the morning . . . from that canvas cover, you know."

"I *know*, Sally. I was there. I *do* live here, too. Remember?"

"Yeah. Well, I was thinking that maybe you spent the night over at Johnny Haltwanger's like you always do."

"I don't *always* spend the night at Johnny's."

"True. Sometimes you stay at Tommy's."

"Well, at least I'm not a fat little eight year old *child* who doesn't have *any* friends."

"At least I'm not a stupid eleven year old skinny ninny with warts all over my knees. And you shut up. I do too have friends . . . Julie 'n Lisa 'n 'n Caroline 'n everybody. So there."

"For God's Sakes, Sally, get your thumb out of your mouth! Do you want to poison yourself with all that oleander juice?"

"I might just do that. Then you'll see how many friends I've got when they all come to the funeral to kiss me good-by."

"All your little friends' mothers probably wouldn't let them come, even if they wanted to. Anyway, just don't kill yourself while I'm anywhere around to get the blame. Besides, Smarty Sal, people don't kiss dead people. It's unsanity."

"They do so. I read it in a book. All the mothers and fathers and children had to kiss this old lady right before—"

"Well, they don't do it anymore then."

"They'd do it for me, I betcha. Everybody loves *me*. Animals do too. No snake ever came and slept with *you*."

"Don't exaggerate. Who wants to sleep with a snake, anyway? Besides, Miss Lovey - with - all - the - friends - in - the - world - both - animal - and - human, that snake had been hibernating in that quilt all winter. He didn't come there specifically to sleep with you. I feel sorry for the poor thing, having to sleep with you. You kick

like a mule and snore worse than Dad does."

"I never have any trouble sleeping with me."

"Of course not! If you don't stop being so stupid, I'm gonna leave you sitting here all by yourself."

"But I thought we were going to go look for turtle eggs when the moon came out, John."

"Not if you're going to act like a *child*, we're not. Besides, the moon isn't up yet enough yet."

"Oh yes it is! Nyah, nyah, you must be blind, you stupid old jine. Nyah, nyah, you—"

"Oh, shut up. And quit prancing around and sit down. Don't you touch your nose at me; There's no such word as 'jine' anyway."

"There is too!"

"Well then, Sally Encyclopedia, what does it mean?"

"Well, I don't know yet. I just mean it up. But it means something all right. Hey, John, you're not gonna leave me here, are you?"

"I am going down on the beach and I am going to look for turtle eggs. You may come along, *if* you behave yourself. And if you go inside and wash all that nasty oleander glop off of your hands."

"Okay, I will. But wait for me, John. Please?"

The crickets in the grass along the path stopped as they approached and started up again when they had passed. They walked westward along the beach toward the lighthouse.

"John, how many is three score and ten?"

"It's seventy. A score is twenty. What?"

"Because Miss Wilson read us a poem one time about a man riding through all these cherry trees in the springtime and it said something about three score

n, and Miss Wilson said that's how many years people are supposed to live before they die. So I'll die in sixty-two years. That's a long time, almost forever, isn't it, John?"

"A lot of people die older than seventy."

"Yeah, I guess so. But then a lot of people die younger than seventy, too. Audora Alston's brothers died right after school got out and they weren't even a week old yet. I bet even eight year old people die."

"I suppose they do. Are you ready to turn back, Sally? We're almost to the lighthouse."

"Yeah. Hey, John, how come there aren't any seasparks tonight?"

"Quit splashing me! The moon is too bright, Stupie. Look. You can see the jetties, even."

"Have you ever been out past the jetties?"

"Just once. On a fishing trip with Daddy and all these other people. Daddy got really seasick and really did turn green like all those stupid people in Mickey Mouse comic books. But sometimes I'd like to go out past the jetties at night . . . some night, a night just like this one . . . and just sit there in my boat and laugh at the fishes."

"Could I go with you, John?"

"Maybe."

They walked the rest of the way home without speaking again. As they washed their sandy feet under the spigot at the side of the house, to keep his balance John leaned against the wall and into the honeysuckle vine. "The twilight colored the leaves of honeysuckles' . . . but it's dying now," he said, half-aloud.

"What'd you say?" Said Sally. "I couldn't hear you over the noise of the water."

There was just a line from a book by William Faulkner . . . the only thing in

the whole book I understood. Nothing really." He disengaged himself from the vine, not wanting to hurt something that was already dying.

Never in all the times that Sally had gone hunting for turtle eggs had she found any; she and John had found none that last night either. One morning, though, that same summer, they had seen the body of a sea turtle that someone had killed for its shell. The sun had bleached the body white and the eggs had just looked like squashed ping-pong balls. They had done a lot together that summer, the summer their grandmother had died, and the last summer on the beach.

Sally drank the sherry still in her glass, then pushed the glass under the chair. She stretched out full-length on the rug, her feet toward the fireplace, her head resting on one hand. With the other hand she traced the pattern in the Oriental rug. It was a really beautiful rug, and the spot in the middle with all the geometric designs around it had always been just right for accurately placing the tiddlywinks cup and men. Sally never had been much good at tiddlywinks; once, because she was losing, she had started a fight with a friend, a girl whose father was in the Navy and who had just joined Sally's seventh grade class a few months before in September. John had walked in and kicked the tiddlywinks all over the room. Then, he had just stood there. So Sally had bitten him on the leg. And he hadn't said a word, just leaned down and boxed her on the ears. She had jumped up, crying and threatening to tell Mama on him. She had heard them laughing as she ran out of the room.

The steps were worn smooth and low. Sally took them two at a time, and slipped at the bend halfway up the spiralling stairway. At the top of the stairs she turned into the hall that led to the back of

the house and her room . . . the back of the house and her room and that was all. Where she could be alone . . . alone and far away from everybody and laughter. She slammed the door of her room and locked it, and flung herself on the unmade bed, sobbing into the stomach of a green and white panda bear that John had won for her three summers ago at the bingo place on the Isle of Palms.

"I hate them. They laughed at me. I bet they're still laughing. Well, I don't think that it was funny at all. He had no right to hit me. I didn't do anything to him. He can just have the crummy tiddlywinks. I'm never gonna speak to him again."

She turned onto her back and sat the green panda on her chest. She blinked her eyes several times because she liked the way her wet eyelashes stuck together. "I wish that I could die right now, just like this . . . and when they come to call me for supper, I'd be all stiff and cold and they'd see my eyelashes were all wet and they'd know that'd died of a broken heart and John would be all sorry then and everybody would hate him for killing me. Everyday he'd come to my grave and ask me for my forgiveness and bring me flowers . . . violets. But I'd never forgive him. Never, never ever. I'd just laugh at him and haunt him with my wet eyelashes!"

Sally picked up a ballpoint pen from the bedside table and printed "damn" across the bear's stomach, because it was the worst thing she could think of to do. She threw it across the room; it hit the rocking chair in the corner, then slid to the floor, leaving the chair rocking empty back and forth.

The stain on the wall by the ceiling was getting bigger. Maybe she ought to show it to Daddy sometime soon. Sally had been waiting and watching the brown spot

because she figured if it got big enough she could get new wallpaper. She hated that wallpaper now . . . it was too childish . . . all those stupid men with those stupid tassels on their hats, riding green horses over some stupid weed. And the "Ma Had a Little Lamb" lampshades on the bureau lamps . . . one pink lamb and one blue lamb.

Sally looked toward the window. Behind the white muslin curtains the branches of an oleander bush that had needed cutting back, picked at the window screen. "I could always kill John by sending him an oleander pie to eat like that stupid woman in the newspaper. I could just open the window and pick a few leaves for me to chew on. But poisoning is such a messy way to die. And opening the window would just make it colder here. I wish it were summer and we could have had the Seashell. Then everything would be the same again."

But even then she knew that everything even back on the beach, could never be the same. John was going to an all boys school now. He hadn't really changed, but in a way he had. They had always fought together. But that was only because they had always done everything else together too.

Sally and John had spent all one afternoon building a dam across the gully to keep the water out so they would have some place to play when the tide came in. Their mother wouldn't let them go in the big water unless there was someone grown up there to watch them. It had been fun when they finished, so they had been waiting for Daddy to come home from work and take them swimming. Sally had picked up some mud and made a mud ball. John was turned around, bending over and poking a reed at a dead crab. She threw it at him and hit him hard on the fanny. She would have laughed,

She didn't turn around or anything; just straightened up. She was scared and couldn't decide whether or not to cry. . . crying usually made John leave her alone, but sometimes it just made him madder. Finally, he stooped over and picked up a handful of mud and started walking toward her. Sally wanted to run, but she knew that he would catch her if she did because he could run faster than she could. So she just stood there, watching John walk toward her with both hands full of dark, dripping mud. He rubbed her and rubbed the mud in her hair and face, and it got into her eyes and her bathing suit. Then Sally did sit down and cry. But John still didn't say anything, not even to tell her to shut up. He just looked at her and walked back to the dead crab. Crying hadn't done any good, except to get the sand out of her eyes. So Sally stood and ran through the gully to the big water. She was just going to get the sand out of her bathing suit, but she wanted John to think that she was going to drown herself because it had been so horrible to her. She looked back when she reached the big water, but John was pulling the legs off of the crab and not paying any attention to her at all. Sally waded out some and took off her bathing suit and rinsed it out. Then she put it back on and just sat in the waves for a while. John still wouldn't look at her, so she got up and started to walk to where he was on the beach. John walked up the mouth of the gully; it was full of water and minnows kept jumping into her toes. And then Sally saw that the tide had come in and was breaking through their dam. She ran up the beach and tried to patch it with handfuls of mud; but she couldn't do it quickly enough. She yelled to John. Together they heaved armloads of mud on top of the beach wall, but the tide kept breaking

through it. Finally, he stopped and stood behind her, watching her trying to keep the tide out of their gully. "It's no use, Sally. Come on," he said. She wouldn't stop. "Sally, it's no use. You can't do it. Look. It's coming in the other end and over the sides." John was right . . . he always was. She washed her face in the gully water; the salt stung her eyes and the new sunburn on her nose. John pulled Sally to her feet, and she followed him up the path to take a shower and eat supper.

But that was three years ago. It seemed that only the fighting was left . . . the fighting and the anger and the crying. Sally turned her eyes from the window and stared at her bedroom reflected in the mirror. As she stared the walls and furniture seemed to fade and darkness take their places. She closed her eyes for a second and opened them again, fixing them on the Boston rocker in the corner. Again as she looked without blinking, the darkness seemed to spread and thicken. She drew herself into a huddle on the bed and rubbed her eyes with the heels of her hands. Still the room grew blacker. The radiator started knocking. She knew that it was silly to be frightened, but she could feel her heart beating in her stomach. Sally reached to the bedside lamp and turned the switch, but the light did not come on. Soft footsteps sounded in the hallway and stopped at her door.

"Sally?" It was John. She ran to the door and tried to open it, but it was locked. She jerked off the lock and pulled open the door.

"What do *you* want?" she asked rudely, but happy that it was he.

"Mama says that supper is ready."

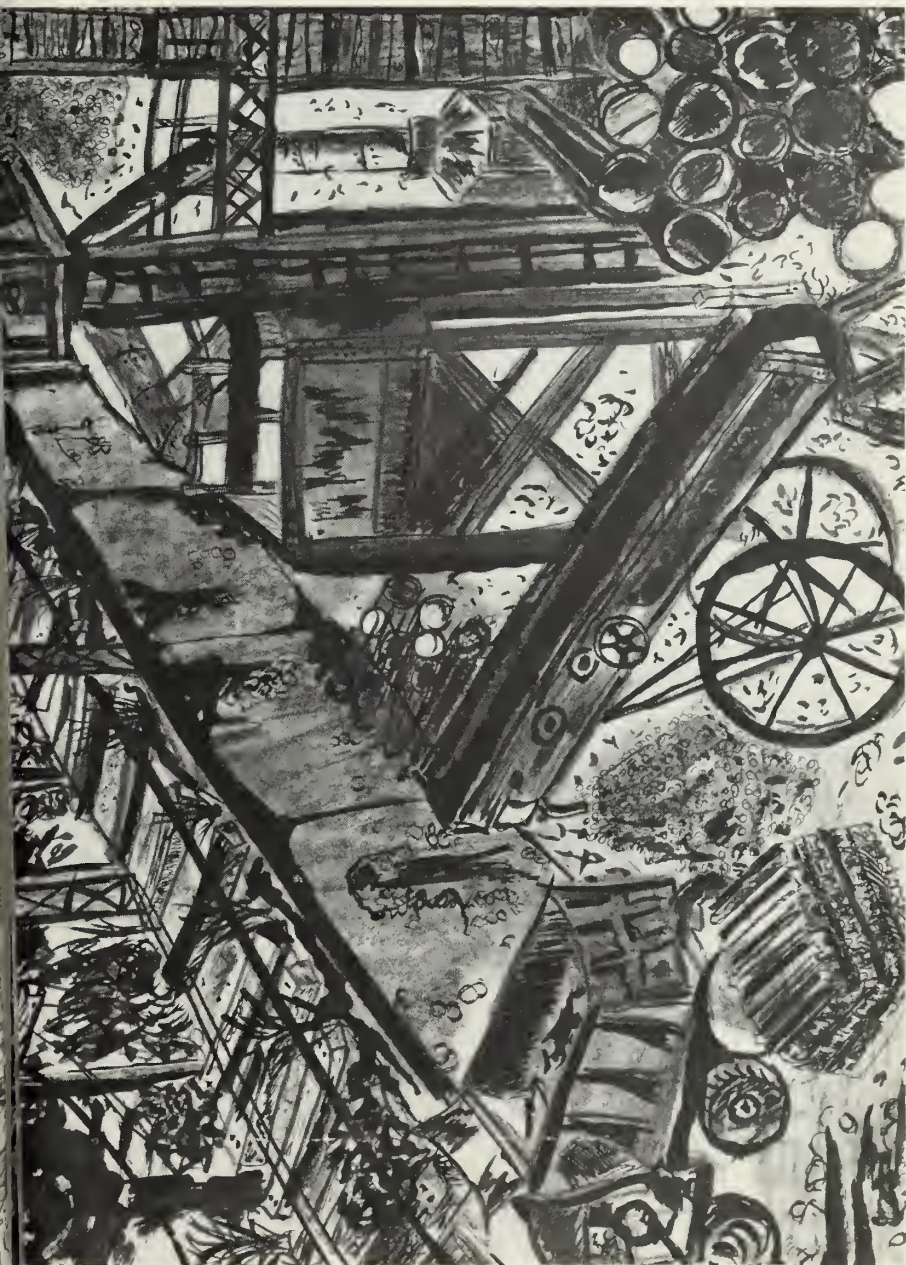
"Well. Tell her I'm not hungry."

"Don't be stupid, Fats. You're always hungry."

"Well. Okay."

She closed the door and walked after





him down the dark, narrow hall. As she followed him down the back stairs, she wanted simultaneously to tell John that she loved him anyway, and to push him down the steps. Instead she stooped, reached back, and flipped on the light.

Sally hadn't played tiddlywinks in a long time now; she wondered if maybe she could have gotten better in the interim. She smiled and ran her index finger around and around the spot on which they had always set the tiddlywink cup. She and John hadn't fought in quite a while either, but then they hardly ever spoke to each other anymore. It wasn't hard to avoid quarrelling that way.

The front door slammed. She looked up. John was standing in the hall, trying to shake and brush some of the wetness of the rain off of his hair and clothes. "Hi," Sally said. She looked at her watch. "Lord, I didn't mean to sit here for so long. I was just going to have a glass of sherry and then start dinner." She sat up, twisting and bending her wrist and forearm; they were stiff from leaning on her hand. She leaned back against the armchair again. "How hungry are you, anyway?"

"Oh, I don't know. Not very, I guess." John stood, leaning against the door. "I can wait a while longer. Have you seen the paper Sal?"

"Nope. It must be out in the rain under some bush. At any rate, it's ruined by now. Why don't you come sit down and have a glass of sherry with me?"

"Okay, Babe."

"Get yourself a glass. I've already got the sherry over here."

John picked a glass off the table by the window, carrying it upside-down by its base. He walked to the fireplace and sat on the rug, leaning against the other armchair. Sally handed him the decanter; he poured himself a glass and set

the decanter between his legs. "Hey Bubba," Sally pushed her glass toward John. "How about hitting me with a sip, one?" He filled her glass. "This is no very good sherry, really. Sherry's only good for old people and cooking. Or for cooking old people. But it gets better after a while. Besides, it's just right for this kind of weather and this time of day."

John nodded. "Maybe we can go to Andy's or someplace after a little while and get a steak and buy another newspaper. How's that sound?"

"Sounds great. I don't feel much like cooking anyway. There doesn't seem to be much point in cooking for just two people."

"Remind me to warn your husband about that before he marries you."

She laughed. The sherry had made her feel warm, and John was in an exceptionally good mood.

He lifted his glass to his eyes and looked at her through the golden mull. "You know, Sally, when we were young, we used to look at people through glasses and bottoms of glasses and laugh at how big and curvy it made them look." He drained the glass and set it down.

Sally nodded, taking a small sip. "I did too. I guess everyone does. Damn. I always thought that I had discovered some really unique way to amuse myself at the expense of other people."

"You look good in red, Sally. You ought to wear it more often. Instead of all those sickly, washed-out greens." John poured himself another glass of sherry. "When did Mama and Daddy say they were coming home? Tuesday?"

"Yeah. Tuesday or Wednesday. That's only about two more days. We'll manage, I guess."

"Yeah. I suppose."

"John?" He was dipping his finger

into the sherry and sucking it. "John?"
"Hm?"

"Do you ever wonder whether ashes are different. I mean, like each one a different shape from any other one, and all that."

"Nope."

"Oh. Well. I was just wondering and thought I'd ask."

Neither of them spoke for several minutes. The only sounds in the room were the ticking of the clock in the hall and the rain falling on the slate roof and in the street. John stretched out on the rug with his head under the armchair. "Has Daddy ever found out who painted that picture in the panel above the mantelpiece?" he asked.

"I doubt it. Somebody once said that they thought it might be really valuable. By some Italian Renaissance painter. But that since it was unsigned, there wasn't really too much anybody could do about it."

John smiled. "You know, Sally, for years I thought that it was a painting someone had done of you and me, when we were babies. I'm the bigger one, you're the darker one. And you're the other me. And I've got an arm over you to protect you from all the wild animals and injuries in the forest while you sleep. When when I was about nine, someone disoriented me."

"It didn't fit our relationship, anyway, John . . . the protector role, I mean. Everyday you used to beat me up, and everyday I would go crying to Mama, and then we would both get punished . . . everyday."

"Aw, come on. You're exaggerating, it's usual. I only beat you up every other day . . . just to keep me in shape and you in line."

"It doesn't make any difference now. It's all past. Can I have a little more sherry please?" John groaned and pulled

himself out from under the chair. He poured both glasses, but filled Sally's too full. She had to leave it on the floor, and lean over to sip the sherry off the top. She choked slightly and it burned her throat.

"The veteran drinker, eh? Chokes on sherry." John was laughing at her.

"Oh, go to hell, you." She picked up her glass.

"I've already been once . . . but they kicked me out for bootlegging ice water."

Sally sighed. That was John's stock reply to that remark. Then she said, "You know, I had a dream last night . . . or early this morning. It was really strange because I had it once before. A long, long time on the beach."

"Oh, that's nothing. I used to have the same dreams all the time. I even used to dream sequels to dreams I'd had before. I think we inherit our dreams from Daddy. He even gets them in foreign languages, you know."

"I know. And I've had the same dream twice before too. But never ten years apart. I dreamed that I was dead. And I was in Hell. Only it was cold, and Hell's not supposed to be cold."

"I know that Hell's not supposed to be cold, Sally. I've been there, remember? I was kicked—"

"Okay, okay. But it was freezing . . . colder even than it was that time it snowed and we built the snowman on the Battery. And I was alone, and there was no color and no noise. Not a sound . . . except for some man laughing, way off above me somewhere."

"How do you know it was Hell. What makes you so sure?"

"Well, it *couldn't* be Heaven, John. Heaven is supposed to be a bed of roses and all that."

"That's what they say. There's a

logical explanation. Any idiot could probably explain it to you."

"Well, what does it mean then, John?"

"Oh, no. I'm no idiot. You sound like a candidate for the psychiatrist, if you ask me."

"I didn't ask you. I just told you my dream. That's all."

"I used to have kinda odd dreams too, Sally. I remember one time I dreamed that I had walked on water, the fishpond in the backyard, and it was so vivid that I really believe that I had actually done it for about four years."

"Well, I'm not surprised, Brother John. You always did think that you were God anyway."

"I may have thought I was God, which I didn't by the way, but I never tried to put it to the test. That time you fell off of the top bar of the swing onto the bricks, you were going to prove to me that you could fly."

"That was just a momentary yielding to the temptations of Satan. I wasn't trying to prove that I could fly at all. The angels just weren't quick enough, and I cracked my head."

"Haven't been quite sane since, have you dear?"

"Look, you. You dared me to climb up there in the first place. It was all *your* fault. So there."

"Wasn't it always?" John drank the

last drop from his glass. "'And that said John is that'. The rain has stopped anyway. And I'm getting hungry now. Let me go get something to eat."

John got up and stretched, then picked up the glasses and the decanter and put them back on the table by the window. Sally crawled over to the sofa and dug her shoes out from underneath it. Then together they walked out of the front door and locked it behind them. Sally automatically checked to see that she had her house key; she had been locked out too many times before. John ran down the steps and went straight to the car, twirling the car keys. But Sally stopped on the front porch at the top of the stairs.

The rain had left everything dark and gleaming under the lights of the street and of the occasional cars that were swishing by. The air was clean and smelled of the wet and of blooming jessamine that wound its way up the railing tumbling and falling over the steps. Sally looked up at the sky; the moon had risen, high, small, and full, above the trees in the park, lighting each metallic leaf.

"Slowly, silently now the moon

Walks the earth in her silver shoon."

Sally ran to the car after John; she wondered if he remembered who had written those lines. But she doubted it.

water splayed out its
sparrow fingers
across his moving face.
in the dread hour the timeless
trees
hung with the last hands of spring
tossed quietly
in the thin cloud-light
and when he dove the moon
just grazed his hair. then
climbing cold and the last
deep song of rocks—
from some far land
the cry of a swift but slowing
car.

Windigo Jones and the Royal Jelly Soap Salesman

There is a word the Eskimoes use for the blues. They call it windigo; but it isn't the blues exactly, it's more like running in bad luck when the spirits aren't on your side and you're stranded on a chunk of green ice floating off toward Siberia and your wife is at home waiting for her lover in your igloo. That's windigo. They have a windigo mask that they put on for ceremonial dances, and the big medicine man or whatever he is comes out and chases away the windigo.

Well, the last time I was in Cleveland, I was riding up to my room on the twelfth floor of the Stratton Arms, and there was this young fellow standing next to me. He had a long purple scar running down his left cheek and hands so big they don't make bowling balls to fit. I wondered what this guy was doing in the Stratton Arms because, while it isn't the Waldorf, it's a respectable place, and I always stay there when I go into Cleveland for convention. I'm a soap salesman . . . Royal Jelly Soap. It's made from the jelly the bees feed to the queen bee. Anyway, I wondered what this guy was doing in the Stratton Arms because, to tell you

the truth, he didn't look real high class. But being a salesman, I've learned never to judge by appearances. You can't tell a book by the cover, I always say.

I'm an outgoing fellow. You get like that being a salesman. And you know how it is when there's only two of you in an elevator, and a slow one at that. You feel sort of unfriendly just standing there holding your hat and looking at the floor. So I said to this fellow, "Are you here for the convention?"

"None of your business," he says.

I said to myself, "Jim boy, this is a case. This you've got to find out more about. I'm an amateur student of psychology. I always say, it's not really soap I'm interested in, it's people. And this fellow, I could tell he was no ordinary Jack Horner. No sir, this was a real case. I don't mind telling you that I almost went into psychiatry. My friends tell me I should have. I've got one of those faces. A person lays eyes on me, and two minutes later, I know the whole life story. And some people feel a whole lot better after they talk to old Jim. I've done some good in my time just listening. I don't mind admitting it

But this fellow, he didn't look too friendly. There was something about the way he said "none of your business" that made me think I'd better shut up. But being a salesman, I've learned that perseverance pays off. So I said to myself, "Just hang in there, Jim boy, and you'll learn something yet."

"Well," I said, "there's a Royal Jelly convention here this weekend. I thought maybe you were from the California office."

He shot these black eyes at me like a pistol, suspicious like, and then started biting his thumbnail.

"I haven't been in Cleveland since '60 myself," I said. "Do you know if the Hat and Glove is still open?"

He shot me another of those looks and said kind of slow and firm, "Listen, mister, I don't know you, and I don't know what you want from me, but whatever it is, you're not going to get it." "Now just a minute here, all I wanted was to be friendly. I didn't mean to offend you."

Well, the elevator gave a big wheeze and bumped to a stop on twelve. I don't mind admitting I was relieved. He was a big guy, and he looked mean. I was just glad to get off and go to my room. I tumbled out that door and down the hall three rooms to 1207. But all the time, that fellow was staring at me. You know how you can feel it in the small of your back when somebody's staring at you. I didn't have to turn around to know it. I was never so glad to hear anything in my life as I was those elevator doors cludding together behind me.

I hadn't even been in my room long enough to read the sports page when I heard the knock. I figured it was Chuck Herman, an old pal of mine. We always met together at convention, so I yelled, "Door's open, come on in."

And there he was, leaning back against the door like he'd just run the four minute mile. I don't mind telling you I was uneasy. But he looked sort of scared himself, and he wasn't much more than a kid really; couldn't have been over 18 or 20, and, as I said before, a salesman meets all kinds. You have to be pretty tolerant if you make your living on the road, so I said to him, "Come in, come in. When you knocked, I thought you were an old pal of mine here for the convention. I always meet this fellow at convention, and we do the town, but maybe Chuck couldn't make it this trip."

"Mister, I don't want to intrude on you, but I was sort of rude there on the elevator, and I just thought I'd apologize."

"Not at all, not at all. Don't mention it. My name's Jim Reindal. I'm from Reading, Pennsylvania," and I walked over and shook his hand. I always say, a good handshake says it all. He had a good grip, but his hand was sweaty, and I could see he was nervous about the whole thing, so I said, "Say, I haven't been in Cleveland since '60, and I don't want to sit here all night getting dusty, so why don't we do the town. I'll buy you a beer."

"Thank you, Mr. Reindal, but I wouldn't want to impose on you."

"It'd be a favor to me, boy, a real favor. Young fellow like you must know the hot spots, right?"

He looked embarrassed about the whole thing, but I whisked him out of the room and down to this bar I remembered around the corner, The Game-Cock. It's a good little place, not much to look at, but a good piano player. I like a good piano. Rag-time's my favorite.

So we were sitting there at the bar drinking our beer and watching the people. I always think it's a good idea not to talk too much at first. Nothing puts a man at ease like just not saying

too much for a while. Makes him relax, and the kid was still looking pretty nervous. He kept jerking his head around like he was expecting somebody to walk up behind him any minute. Well, we drank the first beer like that, not saying much; and then we ordered another round, and the kid gave me this serious look and said, "I'd like to buy this round, Mr. Reindal." I don't mind telling you, I was touched. You could see the kid didn't have much money, the way he was dressed; but I think it's an insult to refuse to drink what another man offers, so I said, "Thanks," and we started in on another. The place was filling up by then, and the kid seemed to be loosening up just watching it all, so I said to him, I didn't want to make him edgy, you understand, but I figured he was starting to warm up, so I said to him, "Well, boy, I've always liked this little place. Last time I was in Cleveland, back in '60, I sort of ran into it. I like the piano player. Ragtime's my favorite. Know any other spots around with a hot piano?"

"I haven't been in Cleveland too long myself," he said.

"Yeah, how about that. I figured you were local. Where's your home?"

"I like to keep moving."

"Looking for the right place before you settle down, huh? Good idea. Young fellow can't be too careful picking a place to settle in. I like to travel myself. That's why I'm in this business. Selling's a good life. There're bad things, sure, but I like it. Meet all kinds of people. What's your line?"

The minute I said it, I knew it was the wrong thing. He got that go-to-hell look in his eye again. But he didn't blow up this time. He just took a long gulp of beer and looked around at the crowd.

Well, you've got to learn to cover these things in my business. When you say

the wrong thing, you have to barge right in there and pretend you don't notice. Makes the other guy feel better. Tell to one he feels bad you said the wrong thing too. It's embarrassing all around. So I said, "This Royal Jelly, I sell Royal Jelly you know, it's good stuff. I wouldn't feel right about selling something I didn't believe in. It's damn good soap. I use it myself. I'm not giving you a pitch you understand; it's just my business, and a man has to take pride in his work."

Well, I could see I'd done it again. The kid drained his beer in one gulp and stood up. He reached over and shook my hand and mumbled something about how it'd been a pleasure. He was fidgety, like he was in a hurry to leave. Just as I was standing up, I saw these two cops making straight for us. The kid looked confused like he couldn't make up his mind what to do next, and before he got around to it, the cops had their hands on him.

The big Irish-looking one sort of sneered and growled at him, "You Windig Jones?"

The kid looked at him, then over at me then back at the cop, and said, "Yeah, yeah, I'm Windig Jones."

"You're under arrest."

You could have knocked me over with a spit ball. I didn't know what to say, so I said, "Wait just a minute here. What's going on?"

The big cop turned to me and said, "Jones a friend of yours?"

The kid shot these eyes of his at the cop and said, "Listen, I just met this guy tonight. We were just having a beer. He doesn't know anything about it. He's a salesman."

Well, the big Irish cop looked me up and down, like he didn't think I was worth much, and said, "Where you from? What's your name, mister?"

"I'm Jim Reindal. I'm from Reading, Pennsylvania. I'm here for the Royal Melly convention. Room 1207 at the Stratton Arms. What's going on?"

The kid looked me straight in the face and said, "Mr. Reindal, I stole some money. That's all. But I've enjoyed meeting you. It's been a pleasure to know you." And he reached out and shook my hand again. I can't explain it, but I've never seen a man look so proud in my life.

Well, I didn't want him to go away like that, thinking maybe I didn't understand, so I pulled out one of my cards with my name and office address on it, and I handed it to the kid and said, "I hope I'll see you again, boy. You look me up. Be sure to do it." And I meant it too.

Then the cops gave him a shove, and I watched him walking through the crowd of people who were all staring at him and muttering. All the time the kid held the card in both his hands and looked at it.

THIS HOUR

In this hour of the hypnotic river flow
 swirls from water plants in the quick current
seem the swirls of a woman's grey hair
 when she falls from a very great height
and so continues in her lover's eyes sufficient,
 forever falling

from this hour of weightless discontent
 the smoke of my pipe passes and repasses me,
encouraging my second mind of death and
 the bitter sweet fiber of my blood, uncoiling

in this candle lit hour, with weed's smell
 and lost fears dogging my path,
I found a silent black snake, meditating,
 which refused to be moved by my prodding
silently, later, he moved away from me,
 and possessed of unnatural dignity
not unlike old women in perfumed cloths.



Yonder Go

"Yon'na go dem pea—yon'na go 'bacca—yon'na go dat cawn. Yon'na go, yon'na go, yon'na go, yon'na go."

Joe Lewis's shoes scuffed the ground. He dragged one foot slowly from behind, trailing a line through the fine sand with the top of his toe until, losing his balance, he lurched forward, catching himself and setting his too-large brown oxfords down with a light plop in the dust. Between the fingers of his right hand he caught at the tips of the tobacco leaves. The plants stood up taller than his head, holding him down in under their leaves with the sun still and hot on his head and the green bugs and gnats in his face and around him the tar and dirt smell of the tobacco—thick and sweet and damp and not like cigarettes. He hummed softly,

"Yon'na go—yon'na go—"

At the base of one of the stalks a grub crawled, it's slimy white trail showing clear over the clumps of plowed dirt. Joe squatted down on his heels and watched it. It moved around the stalk, and, still sitting on his heels, he hunched around after it. Then he forgot.

Wrapping his arms around his knees he leaned his head back. Through the leaves the sky was bright blue. Bright like bottle glass with the sun behind it. Across the shine a small white cross of light moved, arching up and trailing behind

it white—a white thinner than the cloud that weren't there today anyway. It spread out, wavering, making no longer a line but a crooked trail of haze.

"Yon'na go my Daddy," he said.

The grub was gone but the dust in the path stirred. Joe Lewis looked up. "Yon'na go dat fraw." He shouted and then he leaped, dog-fashion, landing in the path on his hands and feet. "Whew! frew at?"

He chased the frog, half falling, through the tobacco, and then he squatted on the side of a narrow gully. The edges of the clay crumbled and the pabbles and patches of sand left by the water in cracks and packets of the packed earth bounced down the ditch. He dropped flat across it on his stomach. His fingers stretched out to reach the bottom. The frog was gone. He looked down the gully, his eyes following it almost to the edge of the high empty irrigation pond. Couldn't go down there. With one quick jerk he gathered his knees under him and threw himself back across the field toward the house.

As he reached the edge of the tobacco he slowed down. He was hungry. He wanted a piece of bread. But She was there, and they wouldn't give him a piece maybe. He stopped and dragged his feet. The dust spread up high and turned gray. The bottoms of his jeans. He didn't want

o go in. He looked at the house. They were all out on the porch, the women all hunched together at one end with Ruby Blue sitting in the rocker, her head leaned back and her fingers spread out flat and hick on the white board arms. She rocked slowly back and forth and her eyes were closed. He wondered was she praying.

When She took him to the church on Sundays, they always sat behind Ruby, and he watched the damp spot on her back spread out and the yellow flowers turn to orange one after another. His pants stuck to the backs of his legs; he pushed his hands down against the seat, straightening his arms stiff and lifting himself free of the hot gummy brown boards. He was sitting very straight beside him and She put out her hand and laid it on his leg and shook her head.

He squatted down in the path watching the house and staying carefully just inside the limits of the tobacco rows. Bobby'd make him come up and sit—sit there on the porch and they'd all look at him. He looked at Bobby; he was standing there with the other men, one shoulder propped against the brown board wall between the window and the slung-open green door. Joe Lewis looked at the green with fear. From where he was he could see the hole. He'd run at the door this morning and kicked through it and then drawn his foot back slowly, watching, seeing the sides of each little square of concrete bend and scrape across the toe of his shoe. He would kill Bobby. He would run across the yard and up the steps and hit him from behind where he stood there with his legs crossed one over the other and push him off the porch and kill him. He would put his shoe in Bobby's face and kill him. He knotted his fists up and felt his nails against his skin and the sweat from his palms ran between his fingers and mixed with the

grit under his fingernails. In his mind he killed Bobby and saw him dead. Dead. Bobby, dead. Dead like the boys at school would be when his Daddy heard what they said. The boys had found him under the vines in the ditch beside the playground.

"Bobby Blue ain't no'yo Daddy."

"He is too."

"Den whyfor he stay wi' Ruby an' not wi' you Maw? An whyfor dey call yo Joe Lewis?"

"Wha' yo mean?"

"Is yo moony boy? Don' yo know if yo got yo Daddy's name, den Bobby he ain't no'yo Daddy—My Maw she say yo maw call yo dat out'n a Book wha' she read."

And he threw dirt at them—handfuls of dirt and they ran into the building and cried and told.

No, Bobby wasn't his Daddy and he knew it and he felt inside him a joy. *His* Daddy would come and get out of his big blue truck and white tires and a yellow bumper and get them and they would leave Bobby and Ruby and the kids standing on the porch.

On his hands and knees Joe started down between the rows. The clods of dry dirt rolled between his fingers. He crawled along the edge of the field until he was even with porch. Then he sat up. He was behind Ruby now. The top of the rocker swung back and forth. Through the slats Joe looked at Ruby's dress—red flowers, green flowers; the white boards slipped across them, cutting them in half. He watched her foot slide in and out of her shoe as she pushed against the porch floor.

He moved back up the row a little. From here he could see the side of Ruby's stomach, swelled out and ugly. Bobby had said that Ruby was in the family way. And then this morning he said that

She was too, wasn't She? He said it and She slapped at him and cried; and he looked at Joe and laughed and said, "Yo maw's right frettey boy, now ain't she?" And now it was almost dark, and they all stood there dressed and talking like church—Something hit against his leg.

"Dat fraw," he said.

He hunted for it, crawling across the ridges, between the stalks. The heavy leaves rubbed his face—rough and damp—Barning, he remembered, smelled different—dry. It had been dry and scratched in his throat, and the dust of the cured leaves mixed with the heavy smell of the green tobacco, and he picked up three leaves and held the stems together and handed them to Her, and She smiled and took them quickly and slapped them across the pole; and the tar began to roll up in sticky balls on his fingers. And then She had made him sit on the ground next to her; and he put his head against her leg and waited—

He was half running now, down through the field, scuttling on his hands and feet behind the leaping brown spot. From the pond he could hear the steady thumping of the pump. For the first time since it started during lunch he stopped and listened to it. Through the stalks he could see the men gathered along the edge of the receding water. The pond was almost gone now. Its sides were covered with bent pale-yellow weeds and slick mud. He crawled slowly closer. Bobby told him to stay away—Bobby'd get him. He could see the brown spots leaping up the banks away from the water.

"Look't all dem fraw," he said.

He'd catch one and give it to Her, and She would be sitting on the porch with the corn husks piled up around her feet. The silks would wrap around her fingers as She gouged them out from between the

rows of kernels. Her thumb nail split grain and the white milk popped out.

He'd kill Ruby. Ruby was in Her chair.

He turned back through the tobacco rows. But Bobby said that if he saw him again he'd throw him out of the house, and he told Her this morning that he ought 'ta throw them both out. But then his Daddy would come. They were gonna' have a brick house, She said, like the boss man's. He looked up. Even with his eyes, a green worm crawled across a leaf. He blew at it.

"Yon'na go dat wom," he said softly. He shook the leaf hard and the worm fell lying, curled up, on the hard clumps of dirt. He edged on up toward the house. They were all there still, standing quiet and looking out at the road. He pushed between the stalks and looked out. A black pick-up stood on the shoulder of the road.

"Yon'na go we boss man truck," he said excited.

Bobby was standing beside the road. His feet were wide apart and he held his cap in his hands. The truck pulled away. Joe looked back at the porch. Ida Mae McCoy was sitting on a bench next to Ruby. They all stayed there, quiet, while the truck drove off; and their eyes followed it. Ida Mae was talking; on his hands and knees Joe crawled up closer. Bobby walked back to the porch. He stood there kicking at the loose bottom board of the steps. "Dey done found her? Huh?"

"Yeh, dey done foun' her. He say dat am-bu-lance gonna' come."

"Dey gonna carry her up to da house?"

"Don' know."

"If dey comes up he'h with her what we gonna do?"

"Joe ain't roun' he'h."

"He ain't got right sense nohow. He ain't gonna pay no 'tention."

Joe heard their voices. The water was

old and slick, he knew. And from bottom long slippery string wrapped round your legs. They had left the barn and walked through the field to the pond. As he waded, the mud filled in the spaces between his toes. He held her hand. There was a splash in the water next to them. "Da fraw," he said.

Joe rolled the hard clumps of dirt under his fingers. His daddy had a boat; he sailed in a big boat on a long water. "Times she war jes' moony." He heard Ma May's voice.

"This un sure weren't worth noth'in."
"Wha' she do it for?"

Joe was squatted down, running his fingers along the tips of his shoes. He didn't look up but he knew the voice and he wondered where Louella came from.

"It were her boy frin'. He done left her. An' she were expectin'."

"Well she ain't no better off where she's now. That's sure."

Behind him from the pond, Joe heard them coming. He started to cry. Lying down in the row, he pulled himself along his stomach. The clods of dirt rolled under him. He was a poison snake. He slid toward the road. He would sit there and wait, and then he would bite Bobby, and the blue and yellow truck would come and get them. He would watch. The ambulance turned into the yard. Its front wheels clipped a broken green bottle; and Joe watched it spin in the sunlight across the swept, packed dirt of the yard. The doors opened and two men got out and walked up onto the porch. They talked to Bobby. The other men leaned against the wall, looking away, not talking. Ruby rocked slowly; someone had given her a fan. While Joe watched, one of the two men picked up a long white pipe and walked into the house.

Slowly Joe began to walk back down the

row, closer. The sun came through the leaves—low and almost red. The dark windows of the house shone orange. Softly, Joe slid out between the stalks and walked over to the edge of the porch. Catching it with his hands, he pulled himself up and looked along the floor. The brown boards were uneven, standing up in sharp, broken ridges. Joe could smell the dust mixed with the smell of the babiew, the smell that was always there whenever he came close to the house. No one saw him. They all stood, quiet, and watched the door. The men came out. They were carrying a bed—white and still. The sheets on the bed dripped water.

Joe dropped and ducked under the porch. Quickly he crawled, edging around the piles of rough stone that held up the house. The ground was damp. He felt the moss prick under his palms. Joe crawled straight back into the dark at the center of the house. He heard the clucking and felt the slick, soft bump of feathers against his arm.

"Dem chic'en"

The dirt was dug up soft, and hollowed out. Stretching out full length, he looked back out toward the light, seeing the bottoms of the tires and watching the feet moving back and forth. A piece of chickweed waved beside the porch steps. His eyes were used to the dark now. He reached out his hand and took hold of the truck lying on its side in the dirt piled above him. The yellow bumper was hanging, broken. He looked at it.

"Whyfo dey cal' me Joe Lewis?" he said. A brown spot moved slightly on the heap of dirt.

"Da fraw," he shouted. "I gonna' gi' huh da' fraw." His hand slapped down. He felt it wriggling and soft inside his fingers. Under his thumb the smooth throat beat.

"I gonna' go fin' huh an' giv' huh yo."

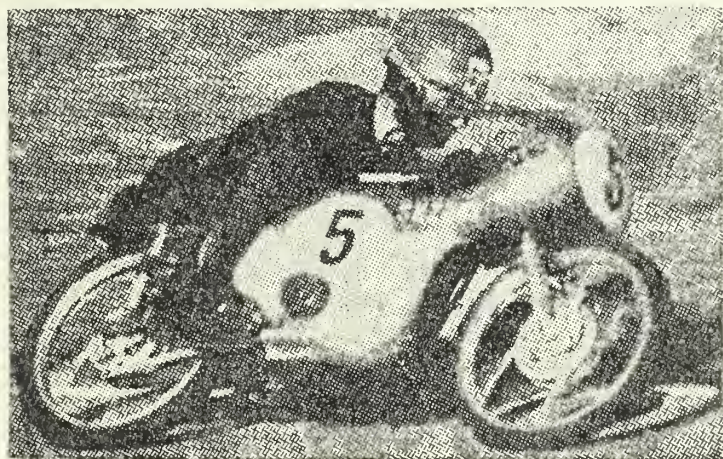
Holding his arm up he slid forward toward the light. The wheels in the yard began to roll. Crying, he pulled himself faster. Then, reaching the edge of the porch, he jerked his legs under him and, stumbling to his feet, ran toward the road. Behind him voices murmured. Reaching the road, he looked but saw nothing. Then through the field of half-stripped stalks across the road he saw it pass, out

on the main highway now, going fast the dust rose around it. He rubbed the back of his left hand across his face, the grit scraping in the swollenness under his eyes.

He opened his right hand slowly. The frog lay with its legs twisted, quite still. He rubbed its throat softly with the forefinger of his left hand.

"Yon'da go da' sta'n wa'on da' come to da house," he said.

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IMITATIONS: TURNINGS

In this tiny poem,
the heart regards itself, alone.
The dance of words.

Snow lies upon long grass.
Imagine the corridors
which cover mice!

Tower-bells. That tree
rang forth flight of birds.
Spring burst into black branches.

under the green slab
mossed slate in the sun
stilled flash; brown salamander
waiting in moist shade for the mud to cool
blinks lidless eyes at a small spider
of near-invisible red.
a reed foot shifts in the grains of dirt
and the throat moves.
skin falls over eyes and the blank of the salamander
slips into itself.

POEM

I am not a blearyeyed ballet dancer
endlessly hopping sole to toe
in perpetual obedience to your baton.
I have enough with frantic waltzes
and silly charades; do not think
that I will also dance in your ballet.
How would I look in endless automatic chain:
mildewed pink ballet skirt
and hairy muscles trained to the senseless count?

No, harsh as alone is,
I should prefer to be a solitary dancer
on the frozen Arctic waste,
whirling to the mad harmonies
of heard music, of music heard
in the mind's ear;
I should prefer my own music;
Dancing on such waste would not be such a waste
And, unlike now, my mouth would lack such bitter taste.



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A Generous Man, by Reynolds Price, Atheneum, 275 pp., \$4.95.

With *A Generous Man*, Duke's own Reynolds Price presents his third major work. *A Generous Man* deals with the Mustian clan, the small band of very human individuals who carry on their struggle for existence in the dusty roads and rolling red clay of rural North Carolina. Rosacoke Mustian will be remembered as the subject of Mr. Price's award-winning first novel, *A Long and Happy Life* and the short story "A Chain of Love" which appeared with several other shorter pieces in *The Names and Faces of Heroes*. *A Generous Man* portrays the Mustians at an earlier period, when Rosacoke is a girl of eleven and elder brother Milo just budding into manhood and self-consciousness. The book presents a short period in Milo's life, a crucial period in his development. It is the story of a wild, indescribable search for younger brother Rato, who has disappeared in search of Phillip, a thirty-pound canine individualist believed to be in the last throes of "dumb rabies" (Phillip refuses to foam and snarl). To complete the scene, Death, an enormous python which outweighs Phillip by some two hundred-and-fifty pounds, has disappeared from the "snake show" at the county fair. Against this madcap background, Mr. Price sits back

and tells a story that is at once deep moving and hilariously funny. Milo finds a great deal more than he expects during the course of the search. The vibrancy and joy of his fleeting boyhood and, one may infer, of Mr. Price's boyhood, are expressed in a style that avoids sentimentality simply because it is too busy to lapse into reflexion. A story unfolds as a character is revealed with great precision and we are allowed to look very close and sympathetically at three days in which a boy becomes a man.

A Generous Man gives the impression of being a much more "finished" work than Mr. Price's first novel. The author's powers of description are employed with great care and he displays a personal knack of including just enough detail in the right places. Mr. Price reveals in all of his works a sensitivity for the people and customs of his home area that conveys to the reader the impression that his characters are really real and quite human beings.

In *A Generous Man* Mr. Price has produced a truly workmanlike novel. It is capable of provoking honest laughter yet its more serious content is presented with clarity and directness. The Mustians strike us as exceedingly real people. Their actions and motivations are *natural*. Milo's growth from boyhood to manhood is

process, an expression of the natural cycle of generation and corruption exhibited in the living world. His sexual experimentation, his coming to grips with the responsibilities of manhood, are portrayed as the natural actualization of hidden potentialities. He develops much as a seed develops the organs it will later employ. He feels new powers released within himself and struggles to learn to use them. At the same time the nature of his relationship with young Rosa is dramatically altered, and one of the most impressive aspects of the book is the way the author handles the shifting emphasis of the brother-sister relationship. The nature of the problem is inherently complex, but the clarity of the solution lies in the directness and simplicity with which it is effected. Mr. Price's characters stand or fall on the basis of their own actions, and one never doubts as to their inherent reality. It has already been mentioned that there

is great humor in *A Generous Man*. It is a refreshingly direct humor, a humor produced by the interactions of real men and women in a real world. It is the simple humor of a momentary situation rather than the refined admiration of the well-turned phrase.

There have been and there will certainly continue to be attempts made to categorize Reynolds Price's work, to put him neatly into one specific class. This is all well and good. But it seems that this latest work displays something quite new. Mr. Price's subject matter and his treatment of it are intensely personal. The author is quite close to what he writes about. His use of detail, his ability to imbue his characters with a self-moving principle, a natural spontaneity, attest to this. In *A Generous Man* Mr. Price has told a very good story in a very pleasant manner. The book holds together well. Reading it is a memorable experience.

Better light— Better sight!

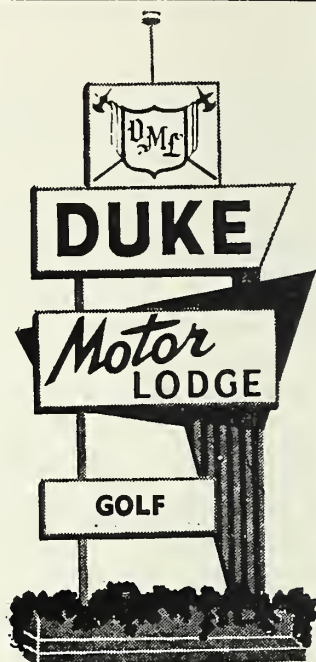
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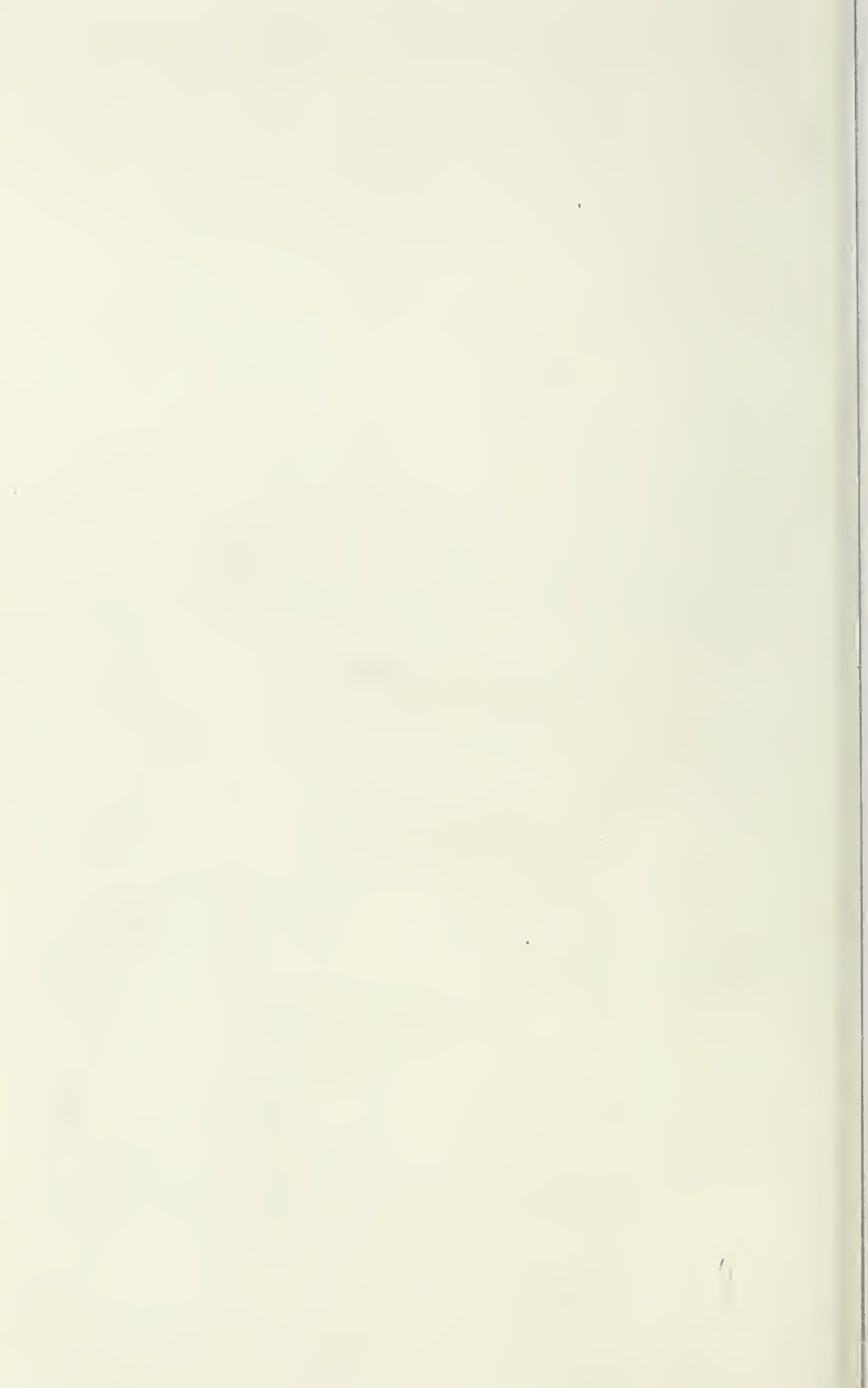
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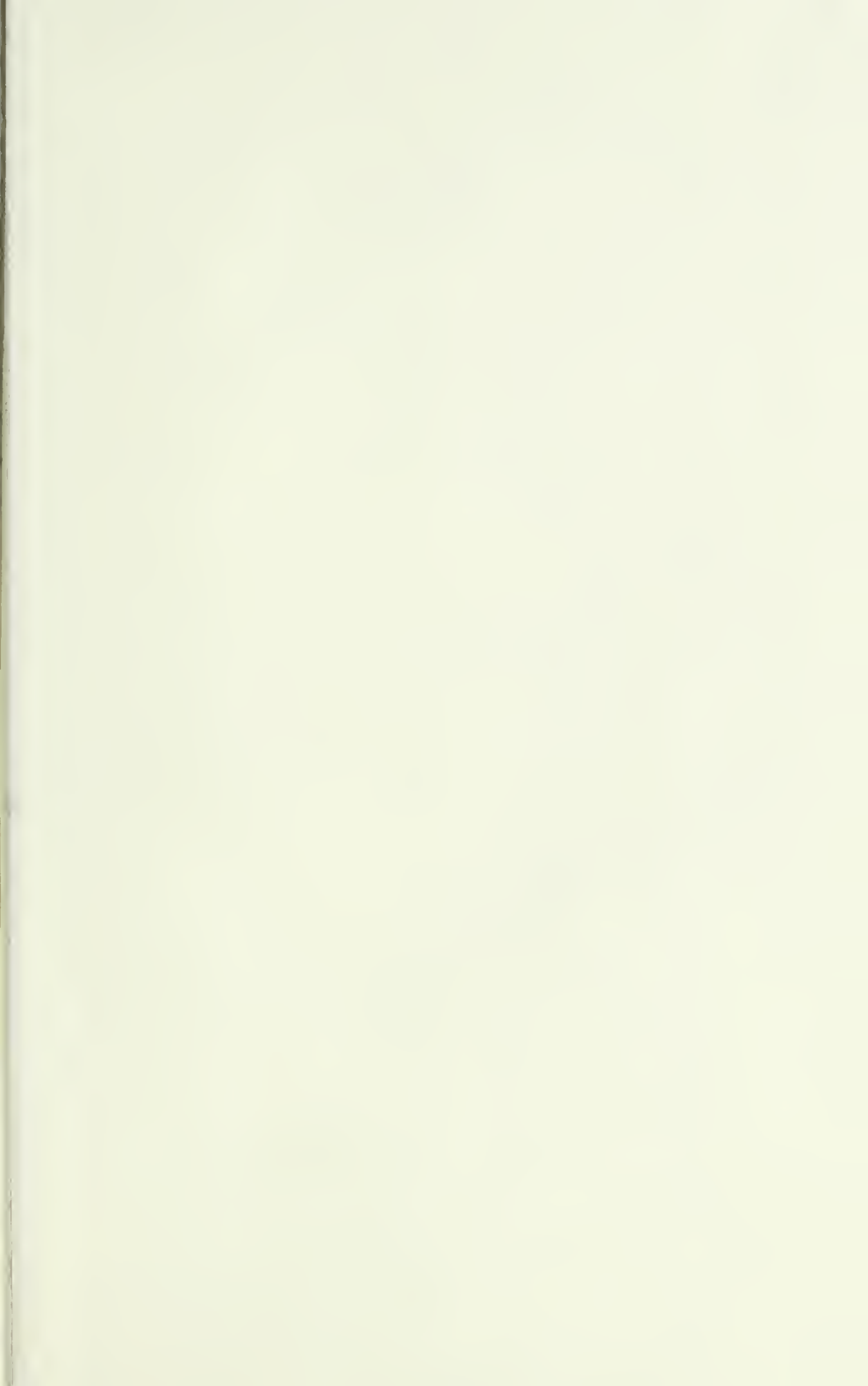
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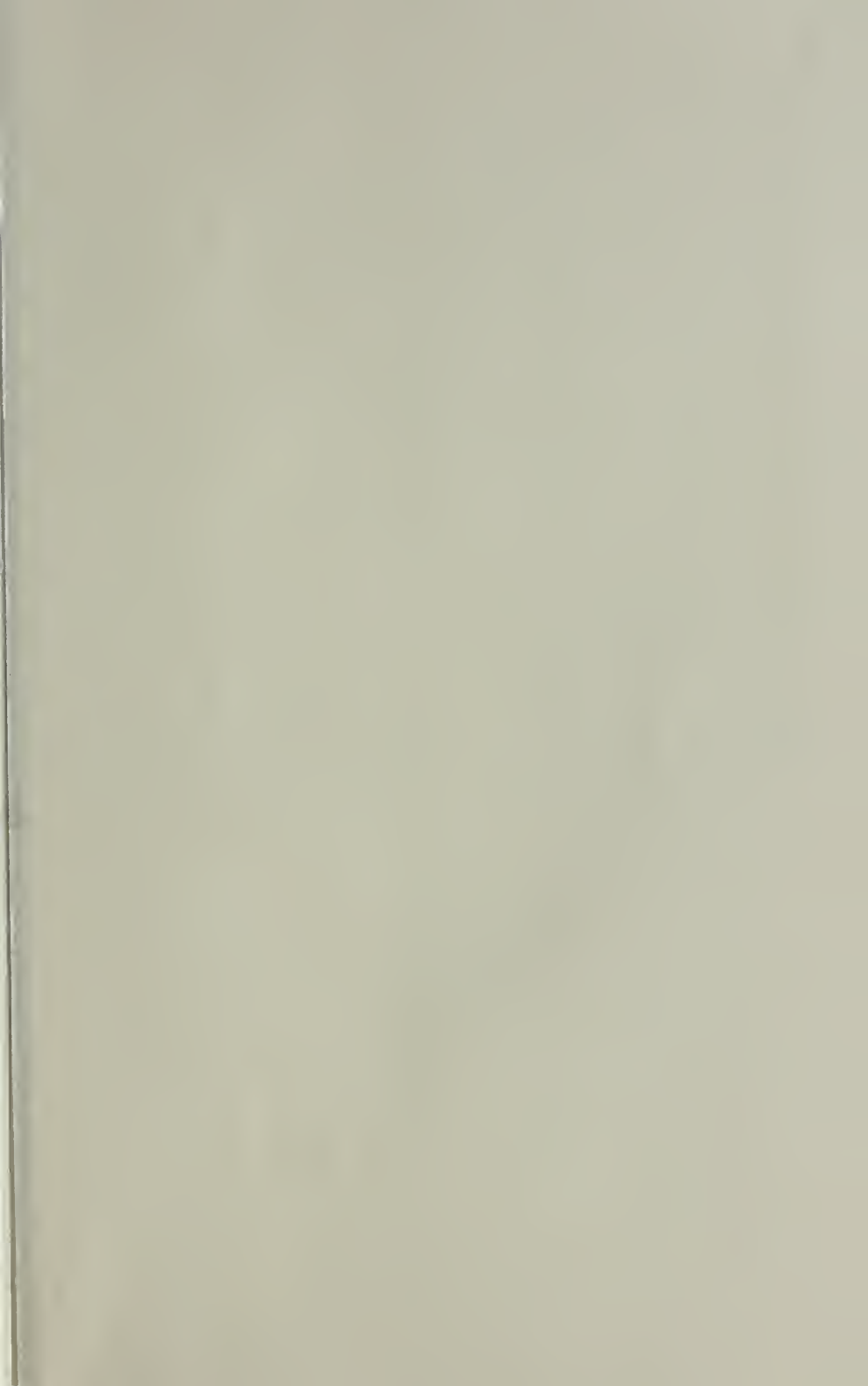
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